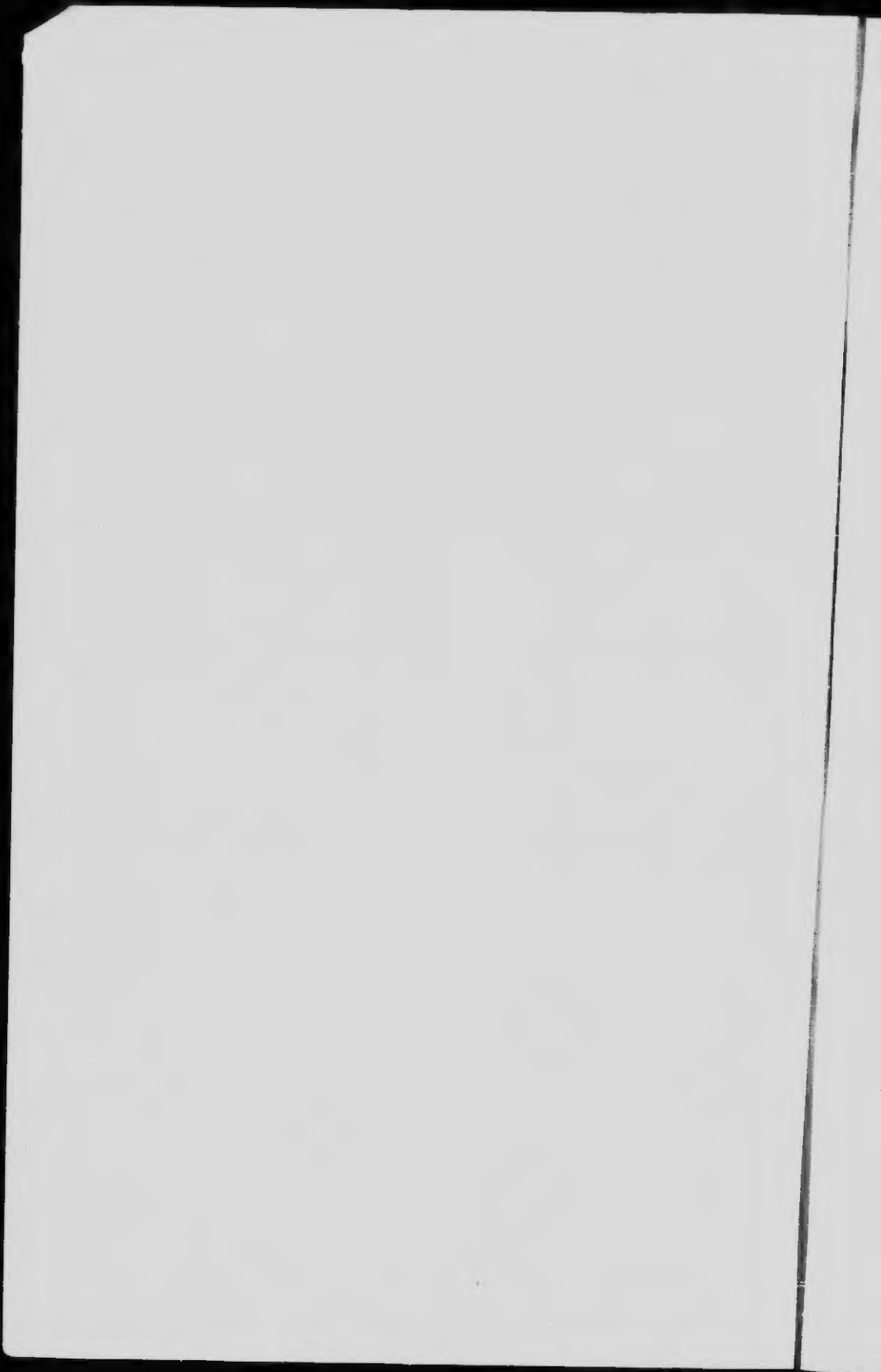
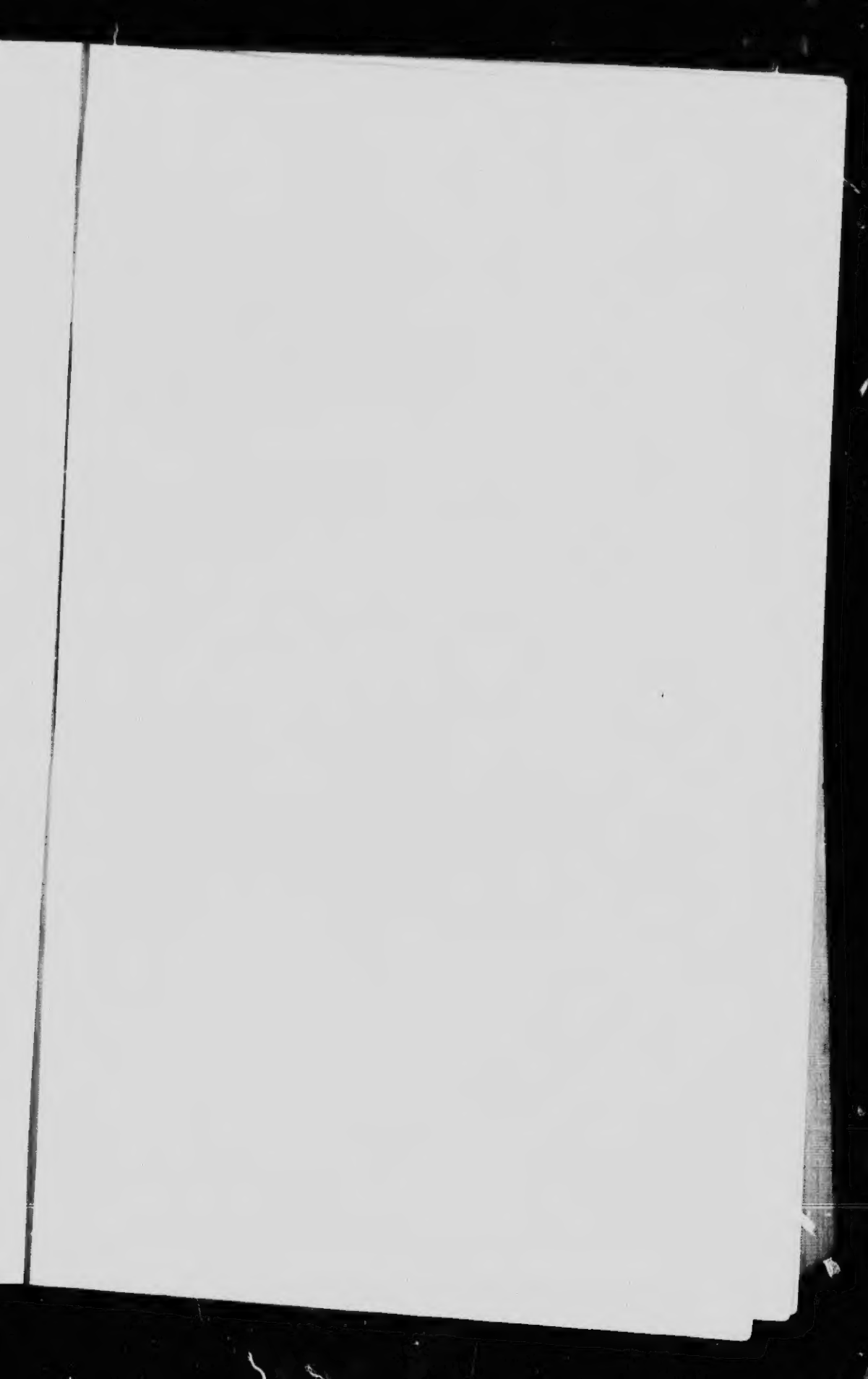


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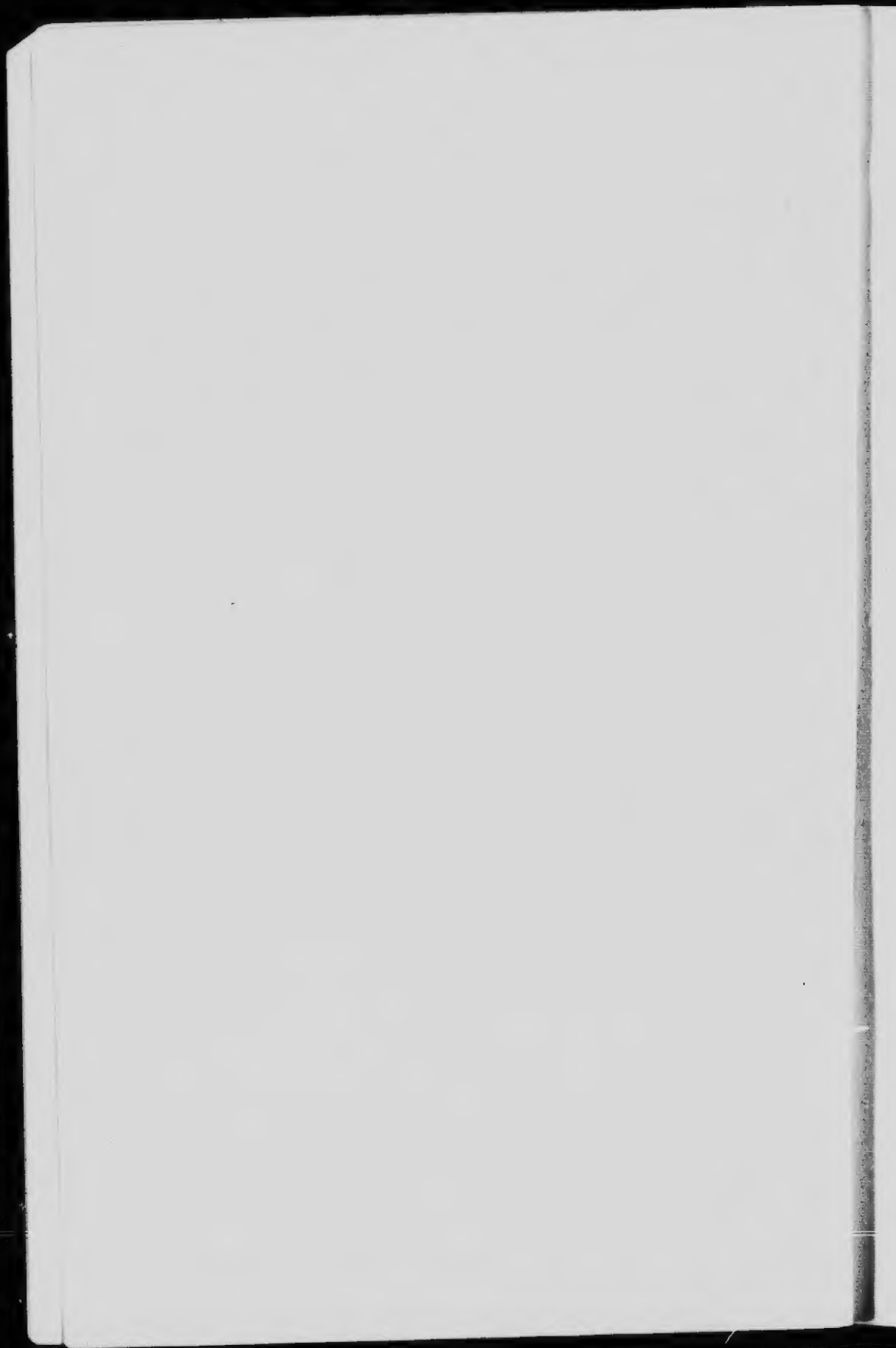












# The Story of Quamin

A Tale of the Tropics

By

May Harvey Drummond

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
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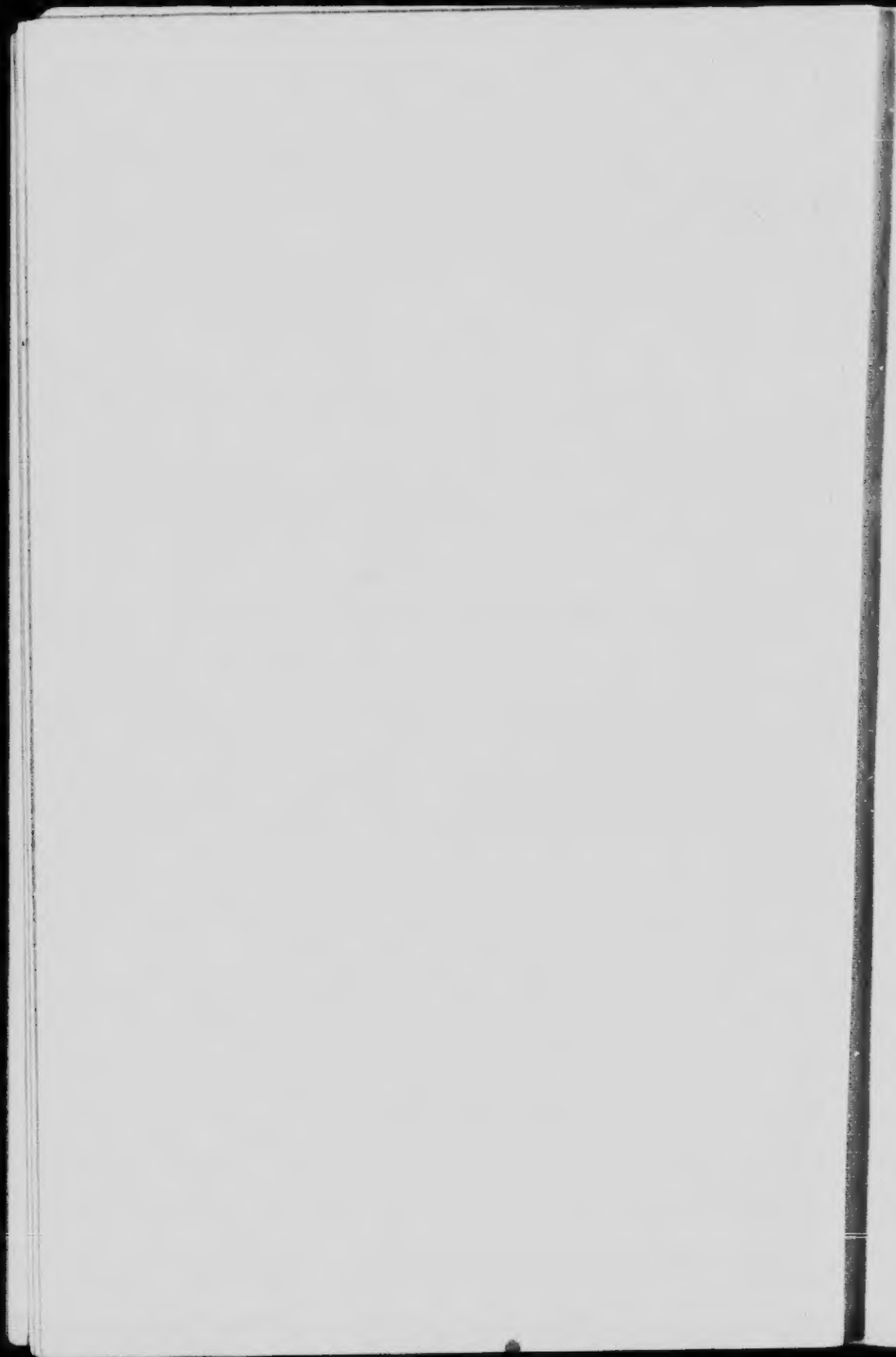
To

MY DEAR SON

BARCLAY DRUMMOND

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"For de worl 's de sam' as de reever dere,  
Plaintee of weed lyin' ov'ryw'ere,  
But work aroun' or your life is gone,  
An' tak' some chance or you won't get on,  
For if you don't feesh w'ere de weed is grow,  
You 'll only ketch leetle small wan or so."



## PREFACE

IT has been deemed necessary to add to this little volume a preface setting forth the point of view and intent with which it was written, explaining unfamiliar allusions and answering beforehand questions as to faithfulness to type, etc., which are likely to arise in the mind of the average reader, accustomed only to the more advanced negro of the Southern United States.

To this end a whole volume of valuable ethical statistics might be compounded, but my purpose is not in any sense didactic, and *The Story of Quamin* has no higher aim than the telling of a story and the occupation of an idle hour. It was begun merely for personal amusement, the idea being to sketch, as faithfully as might be, the life of a negro boy from infancy to maturity and later; some thought of preserving the folk-lore of Jamaica

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becoming interwoven with this, an endeavour was made to portray the childlike and fanciful imagination of the negro as we find him in the country parts of the island before the hand of civilisation has fallen too heavily upon him.

It is true that this type is passing and in this fact lies an excuse for wishing to preserve some record of it, though no claim is here made of having sounded the depths or climbed to the heights of the negro nature.

Every country, every people have a folklore more or less founded on ancient superstitions, and the blacks of Jamaica, as well as those of the other West Indian Islands, still believe to a very large extent in the supernatural, and obeahism is a power which has a tremendous influence for evil upon its devotees.

The term obeah is derived from "Obi," a word used on the East Coast of Africa to denote witchcraft, sorcery, and fetishism in general. The etymology of Obi has been



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traced to a very antique source stretching back into Egyptian mythology; a serpent in the Egyptian language was called "Ob," and "Obion" is still the Egyptian name for that reptile. Moses, in the name of God, forbade the Israelites ever to inquire of the demon "Ob," which is translated in our Bible "Charmer," "Wizard," or "Sorcerer." The Witch of Endor is called "Ob," and "Oubois" was the name of the basilisk or royal serpent, emblem of the sun, and an ancient oracular deity of Africa.

Obeahism in the form of serpent worship has been practised in Guinea and on the Congo for thousands of years, and from these localities it was introduced by African slaves into the whole of the West Indian Islands.

Of late years with the progress of education among the negroes, they have become a little ashamed of their belief in obeahism, but still cling in secret to the mysteries that long generations have almost made part of their instinctive being, and any one with the

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reputation of working obeah is looked on by all with the greatest fear and treated with the utmost deference.

Before emancipation, however, the practice of obeah was rampant in all the West Indian Islands, and ordinances had to be framed to put down and combat its baneful influence. There were few of the large estates having African slaves which had not one or two obeahmen among their number; they were usually the oldest and most crafty of the blacks, those whose hoary heads and forbidding aspect, together with some skill in plants of the medicinal and poisonous species, qualified them for successful imposition on the weak and credulous.

At the present time an obeahman would be hard to distinguish from other blacks, and his trade might be inferred only from the fact of his possessing a good substantial house built out of the money obtained from his confiding countrymen and women, money given in exchange for love spells or poisonous philtres.

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The trade which these impostors carry on is extremely lucrative, and a negro will not hesitate to give an obeahman his last dollar for a love spell, when he would grudge a shilling for legitimate medicine to relieve a painful sickness.

The temple of the obeahman is generally in a secluded spot, the time selected for his incantations the midnight hour, and the charm used a strange mixture of heterogeneous matter, such as egg shells, fowls' feet, fish bones, the teeth of dogs and cats, alligators, sharks, lizards, etc.; and, strange though it may seem, many of these obeahmen are regular church members in good standing, showing what complex, contradictory ideas the negro often possesses.

When obeah is set for a suspected thief, the magic charm is usually placed at his door or in some place where he is accustomed to walk; the tale of what has been done generally reaches his ears through the medium of a neighbour; the culprit can no longer rest,

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the first pain he feels is an intimation that the work of retribution has begun, every symptom is magnified, and not infrequently he will pine away under the influence of an uneasy conscience until he openly acknowledges his sin to the wizard and receives an antidote.

If the charm of the sorcerer were confined to such purposes as just described, not much harm would result; but frequently the evil science is put to less innocent uses, the history of the West Indies abounding in cases of actual murder committed by these man-witches; and as the poisonous plants used in these cases leave little or no trace behind them, it is often very difficult to find evidence sufficient to convict the murderer. The deluded negro who thoroughly believes in the supernatural powers of the obeahmen screen them as much as possible, and the bravest tremble at the very sight of the ragged bundle, the egg shells or obeah bottle stuck in the branches of a plantain tree.

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The spirits of the departed are known as "Duppies," and as there is no civil law forbidding belief in these manifestations, the superstition is widespread and openly expressed.

Three days after death and fortunately for three nights only, the deceased is supposed to rise from his burial-place and visit his most intimate friends and near relations; during this period not a single relative of the dead man will dare to venture near the place of interment or walk abroad without a lantern, and, if possible, the society of a dog.

Many curious customs concerning death and burial are still in vogue, as for instance the leave-taking of Father Dreckett's family. The first night after death, the corpse is left alone with two lamps burning beside it, and these lamps are kept alight in the same room for nine nights after. Food is left on the grave of the newly buried so that the spirit may not hunger when it rises on the third day after burial, at which time it is said to sit on a stone or log near the grave

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and say in tones of wonder, "W'at! you mean to say it is here dem come put me?" after which it returns to the house it inhabited during life and looks over all its belongings.

Wakes, similar to those of Ireland, are customary, and frequently on such occasions "Jamaica rum" flows all too freely, and day dawns on a scene changed from an orderly meeting of psalm-singers and loud-voiced mourners to a drunken riot, and the local doctor, coming down to his early morning coffee, finds on his front verandah one or two mutilated patients of either sex.

If a person who has before been in good health and robust should suddenly lose weight and strength, the change would immediately be attributed to the influence of a "haunt" or "Duppy" evilly disposed towards the person in question, and the services of a "Duppy Catcher" at once engaged, when a change for the better soon becomes visible in the patient.

Another outcome of African superstition

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is the Roaring Calf, a much dreaded supernatural visitant, supposed to be the spirit of the wicked dead, and usually appearing in the form of a large black calf, which prowls about at night, dragging after it a heavy chain.

This creature can be induced by offerings of rum, rice, and white cocks to work untold mischief on the enemies of its votary, assuming, in order to do so, any form that may best suit its evil ends.

The breath of this monster is believed to be very poisonous and can contaminate the food of whole families, turning every edible article they touch to decay and so causing starvation and death.

Like all evil things, the Roaring Calf fears light or fire, and a brandished firestick will frighten away the boldest of them.

The Wood Horse is another of these supernatural animals and approximates closely to his cousin the Roaring Calf, with the exception that he inhabits only dense woods and thickets.

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The amusements which enliven the life of the Jamaican negroes are very much the same as those in vogue among American negroes, but the Cake Walk is as yet unknown. Singing and dancing are the chief sources of enjoyment, and the Jamaican negro will bet his last sixpence on a horse race.

Story-telling is a favourite pastime with both sexes and all ages and Anancy tales are the most popular. Anancy stories are African in origin, modified by environment, and partake in character of the style of the well-known Uncle Remus stories.

No intelligent argument has ever been brought forward as to the reason of the folk-tales of the Jamaican negro being called "Anancy stories." Anancy is a word presumably of African origin, and is the name given by the negroes to a filmy ghost-like spider, grey in colour, with diminutive body and immense long legs, perfectly harmless and not much in the way, dwelling as it always does at the tops of houses or trees. Nor is it



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easy to understand why this innocent creature should be chosen to represent the ruthless, bloodthirsty gnome, cruel father and husband, faithless friend and pitiless foe, for "Bra' Anancy" is a veritable Shylock, always seeking to gain a mean advantage and almost always succeeding, his greed being out of all proportion to his emaciated frame, while his long legs are none too long for his many hairbreadth escapes from richly merited punishment. He is the "Brer Rabbit" of Uncle Remus and the Goblin of Western Africa, but shorn of all redeeming points which are occasionally to be found in the other two characters.

Anancy's wife is called "Crookie," a name which might have been more suitably applied to her husband, and takes the place of all dutiful wives in African ethics, many degrees below that of her fascinating husband, who is at liberty to make love to as many others as he chooses, and in hard times lives on the fat of the land, while Crookie and the children may starve for all he cares.

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The children are frequently mentioned as victims of their father's cruelty, but otherwise, with one exception, play no important part in the weird elfin drama. The one exception is Taccooma, the eldest son and a striking proof of the powers of heredity, being almost the counterpart of his father, only a little less resourceful, and many are the tourneys of wit and cunning between father and son.

In these stories stray words occur the meaning of which the negroes themselves are at a loss to explain, such, for instance, as "Bohimbo," and it seems most probable that these are African words the sounds of which the younger generation have caught and retained while the sense was buried with their grandparents.

We never hear of the death of Anancy for even the King of Terrors is not equal to his craft, and we are told that when Anancy visits him in his mountain lair and sets fire to his beard by means of plantain leaves tied

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to a long pole and lighted, he chases the mischief-loving elf to his house only to find his prey with the entire family clinging to the rafters and quite out of reach. Death announces his intention of waiting till they grow tired of holding on, when they must fall into his hands, and Anancy's busy brain sets to work to plan a method of escape. One by one the mother and children fall and are devoured, till the father alone is left; then he calls to Death, asking him to roll the flour barrel underneath him for he can hold on no longer, and if he were to fall on the hard ground he would be smashed to pieces, in which case Death, would lose a choice morsel. Death does this, and Anancy, descending with as much force as he can muster, drops into the flour, sending up such a cloud that Death is blinded for the moment and his victim makes good his escape. "So it was that Death first lived in the bush until Anancy brought him to the house" and thereby earned the everlasting grudge of the West Indian negro.

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These stories are dying out, being forgotten and vanishing with the faithful old Nanas who never heard the names of Mother Goose or Hans Christian Andersen, but after dark (for these stories must not be told in the daytime) would keep the children committed to their charge hushed and still with the recital of the doings of "Bra' Anancy."

The Jamaican negro like his brother of the United States, is skilled in tasty cookery, requiring but little material out of which to produce a palatable dish. Duckanoes, such as Nana Dreckett made for Quamin, are a sort of pudding made of corn meal, new sugar, and spices and boiled in a wrapping of plantain leaves, and a good hot duckanoe, just out of the pot and still smoking, is the delight of all West Indian children be they black, white, or coloured.

Pones are also much relished, and nutritious vegetable soups, such as pepper pot, red pease soup, etc., form the principal diet of these negroes who are almost vegetarians.

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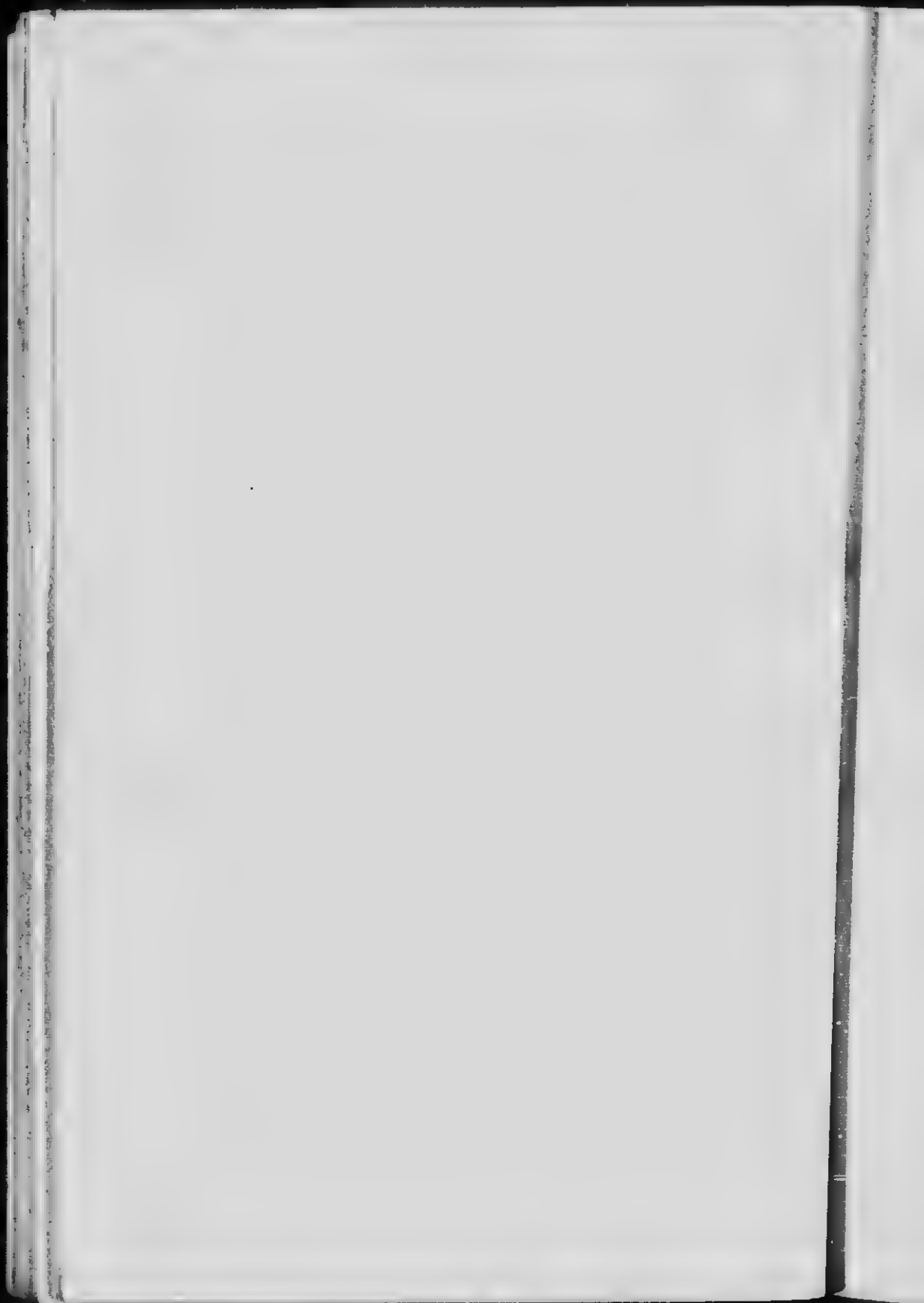
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As a rule, the Jamaican negroes are much better behaved than their brethren of the United States, and outrages such as lynching and burning at the stake are unheard of in Jamaica, for the reason that the crimes leading to these methods of punishment never occur in the British West Indies; in fact the negroes of these islands know that British law recognises no difference between the Governor himself and the humblest black man, and this knowledge makes them not only law-abiding citizens, but loyal subjects of the British Crown.

MAY HARVEY DRUMMOND.

LENNOXVILLE,  
November, 1910.



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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *Short Stories*.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted from *Short Stories*.



# The Story of Quamin



# The Story of Quamin

## I

### The Choice of a Name

THE dawn had scarcely come when Nana Dreckett stepped out of the door of her cottage with a little squirming bundle in her arms.

"De pick'ney lively as any dog-flea!" she muttered as she walked briskly across the intervening ground and into the small thatched hut, scarcely more than a shed, which was her kitchen. Here, on a bundle of corn-trash in a safe corner, she deposited the baby, who, evidently quite accustomed to his impromptu bed, stuffed his little black fist into his mouth while his bead-like eyes followed the old woman's every movement.

Nana Dreckett proceeded to build a small fire of wood on the earthen floor, and blow

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## The Story of Quamin

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it to a brisk blaze with the powerful bellows of her own lungs, then she put on the water for her old man's coffee, set his mug and spoon upon the table, and once more turned her attention to the baby.

"Come here, Quamin, meck me wash you face. I doan has a drop of milk to give you dis marnin', but w'en water boil I will meck little flour pap for you, you hear? An' so you favour [resemble] you ma too! Me poor pick'ney."

The old woman heaved a deep sigh to the memory of her only child who had died when Quamin was born, leaving the baby to his grandmother's care; then, with a calabash dipping up some water out of a kerosene tin, she sat down on the door-step and washed his face and hands with the corner of an old towel.

By the time this scanty toilet was completed, the water on the fire was boiling, so Quamin was returned to his lowly couch in the corner and the coffee quickly made.

Just as it was ready, in hobbled Father

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Dreckett, as he was always called, leaning heavily on a stick, his old carpet slippers scraping the ground, and a short clay pipe between his teeth. Beneath the ragged felt hat, as shapeless as the world before creation, the withered brown face peered with blinking eyes.

The sight of the baby in the corner did not please him and deepened the wrinkles on his hard old face into a heavy frown. Turning to his wife he said sourly:

"W'at I want to ask you is—w'at you goin' to do wid dat frighten bug dere w'en him get big? De mout' de boy have on him already, by de time him ketch t'ree year, him will able for more victuals dan any able-body man."

Nana Dreckett flashed a scornful look at her husband, and sucking her teeth, picked up the baby and carried him off to the house, leaving the old man alone with his steaming mug of beverage and slice of cold roasted bread-fruit.

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It was soon after this that the grandmother made up her mind that it was time to christen Quamin; the only trouble was what to call him, his present name being only a temporary affair, indicating the day of the week on which he was born: namely, Saturday.

Not far from her house, quarter of a mile perhaps, lived Cousin 'Lizbet', a woman of about the same age and, by repute, a prophetess and seer. To her went Nana for advice.

"Teck de Bible," said Cousin 'Lizbet', "den kneel down an' pray de Lard to give you a right choice, den open de Book an' de firs' name dat meet you eye—dat same is de approve' of de Lard."

Nana Dreckett thought this was a grand idea and lost no time in acting upon it. Kneeling beside her bed she prayed, "Lard sen' me a name for de baby, not common, like John or Joseph, but somet'ing none of dem toder one got." Then she arose, and opening her tattered old Bible, glanced fearfully at its pages—Daniel—this was a disappointment

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for there was already a Daniel in the community, so she ran her eye down the page until it was arrested by Belteshazzar—then joy shone in the old woman's face. "Dat 's de bery t'ing," she said. "Belteshazzar is a lovely name, an' Daniel Belteshazzar I never hear before. Daniel was anoint of de Lard an' go up to Heaven in a chariot of fire, an' Belteshazzar was King of de Jews, so Quamin you got a superior name, me boy, an' you musn't bawl w'en parson put de water 'pon you face to wash away you sin."

She made haste to visit Cousin 'Lizbet' and impart her success, but the prophetess, who had seen her coming, was at the gate before her cottage and as soon as Nana Dreckett was within earshot called out, "Rachel baby born twelve o'clock to-day."

"Nebber!" exclaimed the visitor taken aback. "What she got—boy or gal?"

"Gal, an' fat as butter too. Come go see her."

The hospitable invitation was eagerly

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accepted, for though babies were by no means a scarce commodity in that community, and came and went according to nature, yet a birth or a funeral was enough to cause some excitement where nothing better offered, and for a time at least, Quamin's name and christening were forgotten. Not for long, however, and when Rachel's baby had been inspected and admired, Nana remembering her mission turned to 'Lizbet' and said:

"Aha! Cousin, de news 'bout Rachel meck me mos' forget to tell you 'bout de name I fin' for Quamin. Him goin' to call say, Daniel Belteshazzar."

"A powerful name for true, Nana; you do well to take me advice. Rachel pick'ney goin' to name, Ruth Deborah. How you like dat?"

"Firs' rate, me frien'; you is de dickens to fin' name for pick'ney. You 'member de shucks [snub] parson give Margaret Fuller w'en she would n't teck you advice?"

"I mos' forget 'bout it now—how it go



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agen?" inquired Cousin 'Lizbet' thoughtfully.

"You tell Margaret say she mus' call de boy Isaiah, an' she dat uppish she suck her teet' 'pon you an' say she able to name her own baby widouten you; den w'en she go to get de chile christen' an' de parson ax her de name, she answer say, 'Be'lzebub Jehoshaphat,' an' parson say him carn call pick'ney Be'lzebub, for Be'lzebub an' de debbil is one an' de same t'ing, only de debbil got tail an' horn an' him foot meck like cow hoof, an' Be'lzebub meck jus' like plain man. So parson give de baby name Matt'ew Jehoshaphat, an' Margaret was dat shame she never say a word."

Cousin 'Lizbet' nodded her head well pleased. She had not really forgotten the incident, but pretended to have done so that she might have the pleasure of hearing it recited.

"An', Cousin," continued Nana, "some time w'en you got de spirit, I beg you dream 'pon Quamin an' tell me w'at you see?"

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"All right, Nana, I will do dat—but w'en is de christenin'?"

"Nex' week Sunday; Parson Blackgrove comin' to preach at de meetin' house dat day an' I goin' ask him to baptise de baby. I goin' start 'pon de cake to-marra; look here, Cousin, I pay whole of two shillin' an' six-pence for salt butter for it, an' ole Missis give me all de raisin an' currant an' even to de amman dat leffen over w'en Miss Nellie weddin' cake meck. She give me a bottle of ginger wine too, to drink de baby healt', an' you would n' believe de tribulation I into to keep de ole man mout' from dat bottle neck. Lard ha' massey! Sence de day I got colic an' him see me teck a tase—jus' 'nough to warm me inside, him doan finish twis' an' groan himself like him goin' dead of cholera. But him can twis' an' groan, him will nebber tase a drop till de day Quamin christen."

Nana Dreckett tightened with vigour the cord around her waist which served to

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shorten her skirts and keep them from the damp grass. Her contemptuous regard for her husband was a source of amusement to her neighbours, and now Cousin 'Lizbet' could not restrain a laugh, broad and hearty as the negro laugh always is.

"Day-day," said her visitor shortly, just a little offended at the other's want of sympathy, and her shortened skirts went swaying down the path.

"Day-day, Nana," returned Cousin 'Lizbet', still laughing a little. She waited till the other was quite out of sight and then, the short West Indian twilight having begun, went in to light the lamp for Rachel and see to the baby's wants.

It was dusk when Nana Dreckett reached the door of her own hut and Quamin, whom she had left asleep, had just opened his eyes and begun to cry for something to eat. Picking up the baby in one hand and a small kerosene lamp in the other, she made her way to the kitchen where Father Dreckett sat

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smoking as usual, while the pot of red pease soup bubbled away on the fire. Putting the lamp on the table but keeping the baby in her arms, she returned to the house for two basins and spoons wherewith to eat the soup, also a small china mug, gaily flowered, for Quamin's use. Into the latter she crumbled a small piece of bread, then added a spoonful of new sugar, and returned to the kitchen.

Placing Quamin upon his bed of corn-trash, she took from the fire a tin pail of hot water a little of which completed the preparations for Daniel Belteshazzar's supper which he lost no time in swallowing, thus leaving his grandmother free to look to the wants of her husband.

The two bowls were filled with nourishing soup and Nana placed one bowl before the old man, then drawing up a chair to the table, sat herself down before the other. After taking a few spoonfuls, she paused to watch Father Dreckett who seemed to be having no little difficulty in manipulating his spoon.

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Looking up suddenly as though conscious of being watched, he caught his wife's eyes fixed on him and the spoon fell to the table while the two stared at each other, she with ever deepening suspicion, he like some wild animal at bay. She broke the silence.

"But w'at do you, Fader Dreckett?" she asked sharply.

"Not'in' doan do me, an' I want to ax you w'at meck you watchin' me like puss watch mauger Johnson? Dat's 'nough to ac' 'pon anybody constitution an' meck dem han' trimble. Keep you ole she-puss eye to you'self an' lef' me alone."

His retort at an end, the old man made another heroic attempt to wrestle with his spoon, while his wife finished her repast in silence, then she left him and went again to the house and to the little wooden bed which stood in a corner of their bedroom. She slipped her hand into a hole in the straw mattress and brought to light a rusty key with which she opened a trunk, taking from

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it a black bottle. Holding it carefully to the light, she saw that it wanted only the little she herself had taken and her fears subsided, but as she continued to gaze lovingly at her treasure, a certain change in the colour of its contents made her examine the cork carefully.

Yes! sure enough, the bottle had been opened since she had opened it. Trembling, she dived once more into the trunk and this time brought to light a corkscrew—a brand new one which she had bought to use at the christening. Hastily drawing the cork, she put the mouth of the bottle to her lips and one taste was enough to confirm her worst fears—the wine had been watered and was good for nothing, and all her plans for bringing luck to her grandchild were overthrown.

Tears of disappointment welled up in her dark eyes but rage would not let them fall; swiftly she shut and locked the trunk, hiding the key in her bosom this time, and taking

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the bottle with her, rushed out into the storm which had suddenly darkened the sky.

Great drops of rain were falling, but Nana Dreckett heeded them not; in her own heart a far worse hurricane raged and the lightning of vengeance flashed from her eyes.

Father Dreckett heard her coming, and picking up the baby, pretended to fondle it just as her swaying skirts flashed in at the door.

"You ole debbil! give me dat chile; doan you dare touch him, you ole t'ief you!"

She snatched the child from his arms, and Quamin, not used to such rough treatment, began to cry, but his grandmother for once did not heed him and went on berating her husband, her voice growing louder and more shrill as her excitement grew.

"I never tase you wine, may lightnin' strike me dead if I do," he protested feebly, but his wife brushed aside his words as though they were cobwebs.

"You ole liar! Spoiler of de faderless an'

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## The Story of Quamin

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widder! May de Lard do wid you as him do wid Sophia an' Ananias an' strike you dead wid de lie red-hot 'pon you tongue."

A blinding flash filled the kitchen with light, and the roar of the thunder as it dashed against the surrounding hills mingled with the mocking laughter of the old woman whose excitement had reached the point of frenzy. She stood with outstretched hand, pointing to her husband who, terrified and thinking that his wife's prayer had been heard, was on his knees imploring mercy.

"If I *did* teck de ginger wine, it was she temp' me," he pleaded, not knowing, in his ignorance, that he voiced the excuse of his sex from the world's beginning.

"Ah! so you 'blige to own you teck it, eh? Well de debbil comin' for you dis minit. See! see!" she cried wildly, pointing to one corner of the kitchen where a wreath of blue smoke hovered, and a tiny flame-coloured tongue licked the thatching of the roof; "him comin' wid him fire buggy to teck you to



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## The Choice of a Name

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hell, an' I glad, glad! Tenk de Lard dis night!"

With the shriek of a lost soul, Father Dreckett fell on his face and lay there kicking and screaming till some one coming suddenly in at the door grasped him firmly round the waist and turned him on his back, while his kicks and screams grew more violent, for he knew that now indeed his doom had overtaken him.

"Give me some cole water, Nana," said the quiet voice of Cousin 'Lizbet', "him got fits."

Nana obeyed; and as if her desire for vengeance was satisfied and the tension at her heart loosened, she suddenly sat down on a deal box and broke into hearty laughter.

"Oh! my Fader, Cousin, him teck you to be de debbil, an' him mos' frighten to deat'."

By this time Father Dreckett had realised his mistake and was sitting up, the water streaming down his face, for Cousin 'Lizbet' had been generous, staring round the kitchen

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## The Story of Quamin

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as if not quite certain that his Satanic Majesty did not lurk in some dark corner. Reassured by the survey, he got up and looked about for his hat and little clay pipe, which in his struggles had been detached from his person, an event which happened seldom. Finding them, he retreated to his own particular corner and sat down while his wife told the whole story to the visitor.

"An' de bes' of it all, Cousin," added Nana when the tale was finished, "him tell de Lard say is me temp' him."

"Yes! is do you temp' me," came from the corner which harboured the old man. "Wasn' it you tell me say, St. Paul say, 'Teck a little wine for de belly ache'? An' I did got a dickens of a colic dis afternoon."

"Well, me frien', you better not t'ief wine w'en you sick agen, or de debbil won't miss you dat time. Red lavender an' peppermint is de bes' t'ing for colic, an' any time you go ask him Big Missis will give you some, so no need to t'ief an' call down de wrat' of de

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## The Choice of a Name

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Lard 'pon you'self an' you house," said Cousin 'Lisbet', looking up at the roof which, thanks to the heavy rain, had been only slightly scorched.

Father Dreckett made no answer but went on pulling away at the pipe which he had forgotten to light, and the prophetess turned to give Nana the latest news of Ruth Deborah, and while away the time till the rain should cease.

As she rose to go, and passed by the table on which the diluted wine still stood, she quickly took it and, hiding it in the ample folds of her skirts, went out unobserved.

When Father Dreckett had recovered sufficiently to notice anything, he remembered the wine and seeing that it no longer stood upon the table and fearing that the devil had been at work once more, left the kitchen quickly and went to bed; not to his accustomed place in the little fourposter, however, but to a corner of the second room or hall where some empty corn bags were lying.

## II

### The Christening

NANA would have concealed the loss of the wine from its donor, but in its journey around the black population of the district, the story had come to the ears of little black Mimba, daughter of the cook at the Great House, whose duty it was to cut up cocoa-head for the poultry, and chase misguided chickens out of the garden.

Now Mimba was only a woman in embryo, and on the morning of the christening, when Big Missis called her into the buttery to hunt behind the piled-up rows of bottles for a dead rat whose presence had been made manifest by the odour, the bottles recalled the story to the mind of the little girl, and her lips yielded to temptation.

Big Missis laughed heartily at the incident

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## The Christening

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and the child's quaint way of telling it, then selecting another bottle of the same wine, she gave it to Mimba with injunctions to hurry as fast as she could to Nana Dreckett's house and be careful not to fall.

Mimba needed no second bidding but darted down the hill and was soon at her destination, panting and happy.

"Marnin', Nana Dreckett," she said, dropping a rapid curtsy. "Big Missis sen' me wid dis for you, mam," she continued, presenting her mistress' gift to the old woman.

Nana's delight knew no bounds. "Now praise de Lard an' Big Missis for she have a big heart! Now Quamin luck won't be teck'n from him an' me gran'chile healt' goin' to drink wid wine de same as white baby. But, Mimba, how Big Missis know 'bout de misfortune wid de firs' bottle?"

"I doan know, mam," innocently replied the little girl with her finger in her mouth.

"You can go into de house an' look 'pon de table; but doan touch not'ing."

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## The Story of Quamin

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Now Mimba, in common with all the neighbourhood, stood in wholesome awe of Nana Dreckett and though her little soul yearned to pinch off a tiny crumb from the big christening cake which stood so invitingly on the table, she felt obliged to content herself with wetting her finger in her mouth and running it round the cake then licking it to get the sweet taste of the icing, after which she left in a hurry, not feeling herself proof against further temptation.

The night before, Father Dreckett had in some measure restored himself to his former rather doubtful position in his wife's good graces by bringing from the "ground" a bountiful supply of provisions: yams, cocoas, plantains, chotas, and bread-fruit. Then, that morning before dawn, he had killed and scraped the little roasting pig and plucked much poultry, all of which must be cooked for the christening breakfast.

When the chickens were trussed and the little pig in the roast pan, his legs stuck

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## The Christening

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jauntily into his sides as though they were pockets, a shining green lime between his teeth, an old, half-witted woman was left in charge of the viands and Nana went to dress the family.

Quamin, the hero of it all, was crawling about the path between house and kitchen in happy unconsciousness, so she passed him by for the present and took Father Dreckett first.

The little fringe of white wool at the back of his head was relentlessly combed out, the brown wrinkles of his throat hidden by a stiff collar, his gnarled old feet, which knew no comfort save in the old carpet slippers, forced into the new boots with the "squeak leather," and his toilet completed by a shiny black frock coat, and crowned with a beaver hat, both of which had served "Big Massa" at funeral and wedding for many a year, and were of the style of half a century ago.

"Now sit down an' doan rumple up you'self till I put on me own clothes," said the wife,

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## The Story of Quamin

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as she dismissed her better half. Her own costume was simple enough, being a good old fashioned lavender print, carrying an unlimited allowance of starch. On her head she wore a bright bandanna handkerchief surmounted by a small, untrimmed sailor hat.

Quamin was her next consideration and on him she bestowed the utmost care. His long christening robe was snowy white and low at the neck, where a string of red coral beads showed brightly against the soft little black throat. On his feet she put a pair of pink knitted bootees, the glory of which was only for the curious, being completely hidden by the flowing lawn robe.

The dressing accomplished, the old woman laid the crowing baby on her lap and looked long and lovingly at him, while a few tears rolled down her cheeks and fell on his.

"Oh! Quamin, Quamin," she murmured, "if you poor moder could only see you now. An' maybe Massa up a' top openin' de door of Heaven dis minit so she can look down



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## The Christening

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'pon her baby an' know dat him goin' to be baptise' an' consecrate to de Lard dis day. She will know too dat you Grannie good to you, praise de Lard!"

Nana Dreckett rose with a sigh and taking a last look at the table, started with Quamin and Father Dreckett for the church.

Nana's brother Constantine and the grandmother herself undertook to make the necessary promises for Quamin who conducted himself like a man, gazing up at the ebony face of Parson Blackgrove with eyes full of wonder and questioning but without fear, and taking the liberal sprinkling of water without a sound of protest.

The ceremony over, Nana and the parson led the way back to the house and were followed by the guests, all gaily dressed in Sunday garments, chattering and happy at the thought of the feast that awaited them.

Handing the baby to Cousin 'Lizbet' who had come with Ruth Deborah and Rachel, the hostess retired to the kitchen where, with

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## The Story of Quamin

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the help of old Mary, the assistant cook, she soon had the viands properly dished and laid on the table, at one end of which she took her seat, at the same time motioning the parson to the other end.

Father Dreckett, left to find a place for himself, was not long in choosing, and quietly placed himself on the right of his wife where stood the new bottle of wine; but Nana, unwilling to run any further risks, quietly removed her treasure to her left, a place of safety where sat Cousin 'Lizbet'.

A smothered giggle rippled round the table at which Father Dreckett scowled, and the parson, to create a diversion, hurriedly asked a blessing, after which the company fell to, making promiscuous use of fingers and forks and short work of the food.

When pig and poultry were demolished, the big christening cake was cut and the wine uncorked. Nana Dreckett made the rounds of the table, bottle in hand, dividing its contents without discrimination among her

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## The Christening

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guests, but completely ignoring her husband, an omission which was not lost on the company whose ill-concealed mirth was interrupted by the hostess' demand that the baby be brought to her.

With the child in her arms, she rose with dignity and said.

"Parson Blackgrove, I mus' ask you, sah, to meck de toas' for de pick'ney healt'."

"Wid greates' of pleasure, mam," replied the parson with alacrity, but keeping his seat; this nettled Nana somewhat, and before he had time to speak again, she continued:

"Ladies an' gentleman, please to get up. Seems like you doan know de ways of quality but jes' behavin' like ignorant niggers."

In days gone by the old woman had been witness of many a gay wedding and christening at the Great House and knew just how such things should be conducted, therefore her guests did not resent her plain speaking but rose in a body, each one with his or her glass of wine, not excepting Father Dreckett

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## The Story of Quamin

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who, having nothing better, contented himself with a glass of water.

"Ladies and gentleman," said Parson Blackgrove, now on his feet, "dis is an occasion of great glory to dis family v'en de firs' born of it——"

"Lard! Parson," interrupted a saucy young girl, "is doan de firs' born, sah."

"De firs' born *gran'chile*," continued the parson without noticing the interruption, except by the emphasis which he put upon the last words, "have been received into de fold of de Lamb. He have been washed in de blood of de Lamb an' am w'ite as de snow on de mountain top."

Here all eyes were hastily turned on Quamin in whose colour, however, no change was as yet visible.

"May de Lard bless him an' may he t'rive like Abraham, Isaac, an' Jacob, an' may his seed increase to de encumbrance of de lan'."

Here the discourse was cut short by an

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## The Christening

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exclamation from Nana Dreckett who until now had been ignorant of her husband's intention to drink the baby's health in water.

"My God! man, is you dat simple dat you doan know say, drink dem healt' in water, de somebody goin' drown?"

"I doan care," returned he doggedly, "I goir' to drink me own gran'-pick'ney healt' dis day, an' if I doan has wine, I goin' teck water."

Nana wavered between two evils, but seeing determination in her husband's attitude, wisely chose the lesser and poured a few grudging drops from the precious bottle into another glass and handing it to him said, resignedly.

"Better wase de wine dan turn de pick'ney luck."

With one consent, and without further hindrance, the glasses were drained; and as they rattled down upon the table, Cousin 'Lizbet' put up her hand to command attention, then sinking slowly down upon her seat,

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## The Story of Quamin

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her head fell back and her eyes gazed fixedly up at the bare rafters of the thatched roof.

"She got de spirit!" ran in an awed whisper round the table and the silence became intense.

When her trance had lasted some minutes, the seer suddenly resumed a sitting posture and said.

"Here endeth the vision of my head upon my bed."

"Amen!" devoutly responded all the company, led by the parson.

"W'at you see, Cousin?" demanded Nana in eager excitement.

"Quamin goin' turn parson, Nana," replied the prophetess. "I see de archangel Gabriel pourin' oil 'pon him head, den blow de big brass trumpet an' holler say: 'Daniel Belteshazzar is anointed of de Lard.' Den little w'ile after I see him standin' by de altar of de Lard wid de Book in him han' an before him is a vas' multitud of people. He lifted up his voice an' spake unto dem an'

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## The Christening

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'de soun' was like as a roarin' lion an' de whole congregation trimble dereat. Yes, sure, him goin' turn parson an' a powerful preacher in de lan'."

"De very t'ing! de very t'ing!" cried Nana Dreckett, clapping her hands in rapturous excitement. "Oh! Cousin, you is tip-top 'pon de vision, for dat is w'at I lay up for Quamin from de firs'."

Cousin 'Lizbet' only smiled, for right well had she known Nana's desire.

All necessity for silence now at an end, the conversation became both animated and general.

achel, who was too much accustomed to her mother's visions to be impressed by them, had made use of the abstraction of the others to slip some good big slices of cake into the handkerchief which she had spread upon her lap and which she now carefully hid under the skirts of Ruth Deborah. She rose now saying that it was time to go home for the baby had fallen asleep in her arms;

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## The Story of Quamin

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so the company, after giving the hero of the day many loud and hearty kisses, shaking hands with their hostess, and nodding carelessly to Father Dreckett, filed out of the house and wended their way homeward; all except Parson Blackgrove who was to spend the night at the scene of his ministrations.



### III

#### Nine Years After

THE nine years following his christening were uneventful ones for Quamin, who had grown and thriven in a way to fill his grandmother's heart with pride and joy; and now at ten years of age he was much like any other little boy of his race, or indeed of any race, wild and mischief-loving, returning his grandmother's aged devotion with the thoughtless, inconsequent love of childhood, and while she spent her days toiling, now in the provision field, now at laundry work for the Great House so that she might lay aside something against the time when Quamin's education must begin, he was running about bare of head and feet and almost, it might be said, bare of body also, worrying everything within reach from Ruth Deborah

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## The Story of Quamin

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to the old sow whose offspring had furnished part of the christening feast.

This morning he and Quasheba, that being the nickname of Ruth Deborah, born on a Sunday, were busy catching frogs in a pond not far from Nana Dreckett's house. Quamin, armed with a stick and tin dipper, was the huntsman while his companion took care of the captives. As they were handed to her by Quamin, she seized them by one hind leg and struggle as they might, the little brown hand never relaxed its hold; she was a tenacious little mortal, this playmate of Quamin's.

"Quash! Quash, look!" shouted the boy, holding up a huge frog for her inspection. "I got de gran'fader of dem all. De skin 'pon him back thick like alligetter skin. Now min' you hol' him tight for him got a power in him foot."

"Give me here," quietly responded his companion, with calm assurance.

She quickly transferred the four frogs she

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## Nine Years After

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already held to her left hand, leaving her right free to cope with the patriarch.

"You can jump, me frien'," she said, apostrophising the frog who struggled for freedom, "till you foot pop off, but you won't get 'way."

A shout from the other end of the field made both children look around hastily in that direction.

"Is me godpa. I mus' go open de gate for him," Quamin said and ran off, Quasheba following as fast as the proper custody of her prisoners would permit.

"W'at you two pick'ney doin' out here dis time o' marnin'?" asked Constantine when they reached the gate behind which he and his mule awaited admission.

"Ketchin' bullfrog, sah," replied the boy a little shamefacedly, but Quasheba, nothing daunted, held up her hands with their kicking quarry that Constantine might get a better view.

"You ought to be ashamed of you'self,—

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## The Story of Quamin

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big boy like you ketchin' t'ings like dat," he said severely to Quamin. "I did t'ink Nana say she was goin' sen' you to school."

"Yes, sah, but she say I doan big 'nough yet to go 'way so far."

"Well, I goin' talk to her 'bout it dis very marnin', for you will go on till you turn t'ief for want of somet'ing better to do."

During this conversation, Constantine was riding towards his sister's cottage with the children trotting beside him. They were silent for awhile except for Quasheba's continued admonition to the frogs, until an exclamation from Quamin made Constantine inquire.

"W'at is de matter wid you?"

"Quasheba, you is a nasty pick'ney," the boy said in tones of deep disgust; "look here, Godpa, she jus' done bite off de bullfrog toe."

The man could hardly keep his seat for laughter.

"How it tase, pick'ney?" he asked.

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## Nine Years After

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"Doan have no tase at all," promptly replied Quasheba, "jus' cole. I tell de t'ing to cease from jump, an' all de tell I tell him, him would n't listen, so I bite him toe to chill him spirit."

Quamin now joined in the laugh, contorting his supple body in a way which would have made his fortune with a circus company, while the little girl, smiling benignly, trotted along, quite satisfied since she had created a sensation, no matter of what sort.

"But, Quasheba," said Quamin when he had regained his composure, "you t'ink bull-frog got ears?"

"Of course dem got ears. You ever hear of livin' t'ing widouten ears?" she queried scornfully.

"But I tell you dem doan has ears for I look for ears 'pon dem an' I never fin' any yet. You is a wicked gal to torment de poor insecc' like dat w'en him could n't hear w'at you say."

"Doan bodder me," she impatiently re-

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## The Story of Quamin

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plied, getting angry at last, "or I will t'row de whole lot of dem 'pon you to chill for you spirit."

"But I tell you say——"

Before Quamin could finish his sentence the five frogs had slapped against his face and fallen to the ground and Quasheba was running away as fast as her little legs could carry her.

He started in hot pursuit but Constantine stopped him, saying.

"Lef' de gal alone; you is too ole for such foolishness."

The boy came back obediently and walked the rest of the way to his grandmother's house, holding on to Constantine's saddle flap.

Nana was pleased to see her brother and took him into the house while Quamin led the mule out of range of his godfather's sight, then jumping nimble on his back, went through a series of wonderful equestrian manœuvres, while his fate was being decided

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## Nine Years After

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within the cottage where Constantine was pointing out to his sister the evil of letting a big boy like Quamin roam around idle.

"Him will never come to no good, sister, an' dough him doan know not'ing 'bout animal—carn even ride—seein' as how I bein' his godfather an' meck de promise to de Lard to teach him de way of salvation, I will teck him in de place of Job dat lef' las' week an' teach him de penn work."

The old woman spent a few seconds in deep thought, then, with a sigh of resignation replied:

"All right, Constantine, but him mus' sleep home for de firs' for him too little to lef' me altogedder."

"Him can do dat, sister," replied her brother rising to go and well pleased with the success of his mission; he was honestly proud of his godson and meant to keep the vow made at his baptism to the best of his ability. True, his morality was not of the highest order, but this did not militate

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## The Story of Quamin

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against him in the eyes of his compatriots, and to the boy he was a veritable hero.

Quamin seeing Constantine standing at the door, quickly sprang forward from under the sheltering orange tree where he and the mule had been taking a rest, and went towards him.

"How would you like to be pennkeeper boy, Quamin?" asked the man, as he swung himself into the saddle.

"Would like it firs' rate, sah," the boy returned, gazing at his godfather with sparkling eyes.

"Very well! Come to de cow pen Monday marnin' six o'clock. Doan forget now."

Constantine rode off, and Quamin turning to his grandmother asked eagerly.

"Him mean dat, Grannie?"

"Yes, Daniel Belteshazzar, you goin' to work Monday."

The boy turned a somersault to relieve his feelings of joy, while the old woman turned hastily into the house to hide her emotion.



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## Nine Years After

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To the restlessness of youth, this first step towards independence was an occasion of pure joy—to the aged experience of his grandmother, it was as the first flight of the little bird, full of unseen dangers, and her loving heart feared for him.

#### IV

#### Quamin Goes to Work

**M**ANY Monday mornings had come and gone and Nana, as well as Quamin, had grown accustomed to the new order of things. Every morning at five o'clock the old woman would wake her grandson, usually by means of a generous sprinkling of cold water on his face, for Quamin slept well, then when he had wiped the drops from his face with the tail of his shirt and struggled into his trousers, she set before him a cup of steaming sugar and water, and a thick piece of bread, which Quamin ate while he rubbed the sleep from his eyes. A hasty wash to his face and hands with the end of a towel dipped in the barrel of rain water, at the door, finished his preparations and off he ran to his day's work.

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## Quamin Goes to Work

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This was n't always easy or pleasant, for sometimes the cattle "broke pasture" and got into the guinea-grass pieces which were set aside for the feeding of horses and sometimes a steer which was being fattened for market; then it was Quamin's duty, aided by the other pennkeeper boy, Harry, to drive them out again.

As this happened nearly always after a heavy rain, the long grass drenched them to the skin, its sharp blades cut their hands, and innumerable ticks, scourge of the tropics, climbed up their legs to find a resting place under the scant clothing of the boys, there to torment them with all but unbearable irritation until the cattle were all driven out and the grass piece gate shut and locked against further intrusion, when they found themselves at liberty to take off their soaking garments and aid each other in exterminating the enemy.

Still life rather suited Quamin who liked duty and could never stick to any

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## The Story of Quamin

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one thing long; besides, he was naturally clever and readily learnt all that Constantine taught him.

With Harry it was different. He was some two years older than Quamin and had been forced into penn work by his parents who turned a deaf ear to his earnest entreaty to be allowed to learn a trade instead. Nor was he quick-witted as the younger boy, who soon outdid him in all branches of penn-keeping knowledge.

For some time Harry did not seem to notice this or feel any resentment, but mischief was brewing, and as usual, a woman stirred the caldron.

There were young mules to be broken, a difficult and dangerous job, requiring no mean equestrian skill and much pluck, and Constantine had warned the boys to be ready for the task in the morning.

Harry received the intimation in glum silence, while Quamin, as usual, stood on his head to express his delight and with his naked

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## Quamin Goes to Work

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toes plucked the hat from Harry's head. The latter turned and snatching angrily at his property, said:

"I never see a boy like you, Quamin, you never done wid you poppy-show. De t'ought of w'at dem mule goin' do wid you in de marnin' ought to 'nough to meck you stan' softly. Perhaps, dough, is de las' time you goin' stan' 'pon you head, so maybe you better meck de bes' of it."

Harry turned sorrowfully away and Quamin jumping to his feet, called out.

"Chow! you too coward. Massa up a' top should have meck you to wear frock."

"You lie!" responded Harry. "I doan 'fraid, but I doan like de job, dat 's all."

Quamin laughed derisively and started for home, calling back to Harry as he went, "To-marra will be de fun."

Half way to Nana Dreckett's house he found Quasheba seated on the grass holding with both hands her wide brimmed straw hat where it lay on the ground beside her.

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## The Story of Quamin

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"Quamin! Quamin! come here," she called as soon as the boy came in sight, and he ran towards her, asking eagerly:

"W'at you got dere?"

"Crawb, able w'ite crawb!" she replied excitedly. "I see him come out of him hole over dere an' I wait till him gone far 'nough, den I run up behin' an' cover him wid me hat."

"Den w'at meck you did n't teck him up all dis time?" he asked.

"I go to teck him up in de hat, but jus' as I shove de hat brim so—him poke out one of him eye out of dat little hole in de crown, an' de way him cut dat eye after me, meck, I feel worse dan tuppee [penny halfpenny] wort' of puke physic; so I jus' sit down here an' turn me head so I could n't see de eye, same time I holdin' down de hat wid me two han'."

Quamin laughed, then said, "Let go."

Quasheba obeyed readily for her little arms were quite tired out, she had squeezed

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## Quamin Goes to Work

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so hard upon the hat to prevent the crab from escaping.

Quamin drew from his pocket a piece string and tied it round one projecting claw which had escaped and was waving wildly about in the endeavour to seize its captor. This done, the crab was drawn from his prison and carried dangling from the string to Nana's cottage where the boy, in answer to the little girl's request for the prize, swung it out towards her and the angry crustacean, seizing Quasheba's dress, clung to it despite all her efforts to break loose.

"Quamin! Quamin! teck him off before him bite me," she shrieked, while her tormentor only laughed and said:

"Well, w'at meck you t'row bullfrog in me face one time? I will teach you dat w'at dem say is true, 'saucy somebody always ketch trouble.' "

"Do me good, Quamin, teck off de t'ing, do," pleaded Quasheba, and finally the boy relented and with a stick knocked off the

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## The Story of Quamin

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tenacious claw which Quasheba picked up and stuffed into the bosom of her dress.

The crab now free, Quamin swung it right into her face, at the same time letting go the string. It fell to the ground from whence it was quickly reclaimed by its indignant owner, who turned up the path leading to her own home without even a look at her companion.

When she had gone some way, Quamin called after her.

"Quasheba, dem goin' break young mule to-marra; you want to see de fun?"

The little girl swung round, all resentment wiped out by this invitation, and answered quickly.

"Yes; w'en?"

"W'en cow milk done in de marnin'. If you want to see de business, you better come wid me w'en I go, 'bout half pas' five."

"All right, I will ketch here before dat time."



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## Quamin Goes to Work

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So peace was restored and Quasheba went home to boil and eat her crab, while Quamin turned to his grandmother's door, his mind full of to-morrow.

## V

### Concerning the Breaking of Mules

**T**O-MORROW dawned and became to-day, and long before sunrise the two children were making their way to the cow pen, where they were soon joined by old Constantine and Harry.

The two boys fell to milking while the "Busha" (overseer), seated on his mule, superintended proceedings, Quasheba remaining outside the railings of the pen and trying to make friends with the shy little calves that Harry and Quamin, with many a "hooshya!" drove from their mothers' sides.

At last when the three pails were full of frothing milk, and the boys had carried them to the house, the real business of the morning began.

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## The Breaking of Mules

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The mules to be broken were driven into the pen and amid wild excitement and much hallooing, lassoed or "cast," as the saying is in the Island, then tied to poles, where they stood lashing their tails and snorting impatiently.

"I t'ink we will start 'pon Dare Debbil Dick," said Constantine, "as him is de wors'es". Samuel, you got de plantain trash and crokas bag an' de long whip? Bery well! tie de bag 'pon him back, but not so tight as to cut him belly—you understan'?"

"Yes, sah," replied Samuel, and folded the bags in four, making them about the size of a saddle; then he approached the tethered animal and cautiously slipping the bags upon his back, proceeded to tie them in place with a rope around the mule's body.

At the first pull that Samuel gave to the rope, Dare Devil Dick broke into open rebellion and for a few seconds it would have been hard to say when his hind legs rested on the ground, or when they were in the air; but

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## The Story of Quamin

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Samuel was an expert at this sort of thing and kept his hold on the rope while evading the flying hoofs of the mule.

"Wring him ears! wring him ears!" called the overseer, and Quamin, burning with excitement and the zeal of immaturity, leapt forward and caught the animal's left ear.

This wringing was no gentle matter, but it quieted the creature long enough for Samuel to complete his task and attach a long rope to the halter; then he freed the mule's head from the pole to which it had been tethered.

Confusion reigned. The mule jumped, kicked, and tried by every device known to his species to get away, but Samuel held him fast while another of the penn hands used the long whip to such good advantage that at last the stubborn creature stopped its capers and settled down to a steady gallop, round and round in a circle as wide as the rope would allow, with Samuel the centre of it, revolving on his own axis, so to speak.

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## The Breaking of Mules

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When Dare Devil Dick had had enough of this sort of exercise and stood panting, his sides white with foam, Samuel took off the bags, replacing them with a saddle, leaving the rope in a long noose around his neck.

"Now, which of you boys goin' to mount firs'?" asked the overseer, and Quamin sprang forward.

"Me, Busha—please, sah?"

Constantine, knowing the dangers of the situation, hesitated, but Quamin pleaded again and he yielded.

"All right, but mind him doan bruck you neck, an' doan meck you heel touch him side."

The boy laughed and in a moment was on the animal's back, riding off, with Samuel holding the end of the rope.

All went well, and no lamb could have behaved more meekly than the mule until, alas! Quamin, in his excitement and elation, forgot his godfather's injunction and used his spurless heel to urge on his steed.

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## The Story of Quamin

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The effect was magical. With one bound, Dare Devil Dick had torn himself from Samuel's hold and with head down and hoofs in air, was doing his best to rid himself of his unwonted burden; but Quamin stuck fast and the enraged animal gave up the attempt and rushed away over the pastures under trees, over ditches, till he was lost to sight over the brow of the hill and Constantine turned an ashy face to Samuel, saying, "God Almighty! de boy dead already."

They went in search of Quamin, expecting to find his mangled corpse by the wayside, but no trace of him could they find. Still Constantine rode on, the others following on foot, till they reached the public road, where a passer-by told them the mule had passed him at a gallop, the boy still on his back.

While they talked, a halloo came from far down the road and Constantine's heart leapt for joy, for here was Quamin jogging along towards them, Dare Devil Dick having

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## The Breaking of Mules

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galloped himself into submission, and the boy on his back full of triumph.

"How far him carry you, Quamin?" asked Constantine.

"Jus' to de top of dat hill dere w'ere you see de obeahman house. Him did 'pon strong galloping, slap up de hill, but de firs' sight him ketch of Guinea Bill standin' at him door mouth, him blow him nose so, *phrrrrrum!* an' stop dat sudden him mos' t'row me down; den him turn roun' quiet as Parson Blackgrove bli'a' eye mare an' meck to come home."

There was no doubt that Dare Devil Dick had met his match and been conquered, for the poor beast, as soon as the saddle was taken from his back, walked quietly to the pond to get a drink, after which he lay down to rest.

As for Quamin, he was the centre of an admiring group who made him tell the tale of his ride again and again, until Constantine reminded them that it was time to return to work.

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## The Story of Quamin

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Harry was the only one to have no word of praise for Quamin's daring; a wild jealousy had taken possession of his heart, and to make matters worse, Quasheba had openly called him a coward as well as other names less complimentary, so when the chatterers were dispersed, he walked off to feed the pigs with a heavy scowl on his face.

Quasheba spent the day in following Quamin about and at dusk, when work was over, Samuel, the pennkeeper, declared his intention of going part of the way home with the children, adding in explanation of this unheard-of step, that it was not well for children to walk alone so late.

His listeners looked wonderingly at each other and one of them muttered, "De man turn fool over dat boy."

When half way to the house, the pennkeeper said to Quamin:

"I goin' race me mare Bees Wing at de Bay races after Christmas; you t'ink you could manage to ride her for me?"



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## The Breaking of Mules

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"True, you mean dat, Massa Samuel?" asked the boy eagerly.

"Yes, for true. You is jus' 'bout de right size an' I t'ink Constantine will len' you to me for de t'ree day."

"Hooray! Hooray! I goin' turn jockya," he shouted, cutting his usual capers, then when enough steam had been let off to enable him to walk quietly along, he plied Samuel with questions and finally, as Nana's house came in view, and with it the road leading in another direction to Samuel's cottage, extracted a promise from the penn-keeper that he would speak to Constantine on the morrow, and also let the new jockey try his steed.

Had Quamin been a white boy, he would have lain awake half the night with excitement and joy; but being black, his head had hardly touched the straw mattress when he fell asleep.

## VI

### OBEAH

CONSTANTINE consented to Samuel's request, not without a feeling of pride in the confidence shown by the pennkeeper in Quamin's riding, and the boy himself gave all his spare time to the racer. When the mare went out to exercise, Quamin was there to watch her start, and best of all, when she was galloped around the local race-course, Quamin was on her back. An English riding master would have said that the boy's heels were not held close enough to the horse's sides, but there his criticism must have stopped, for the young jockey sat his steed perfectly, and his hands guided the fiery little mare so skilfully yet withal so gently, that Bees Wing knew he loved her, and always did her best for him.

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## Obeah

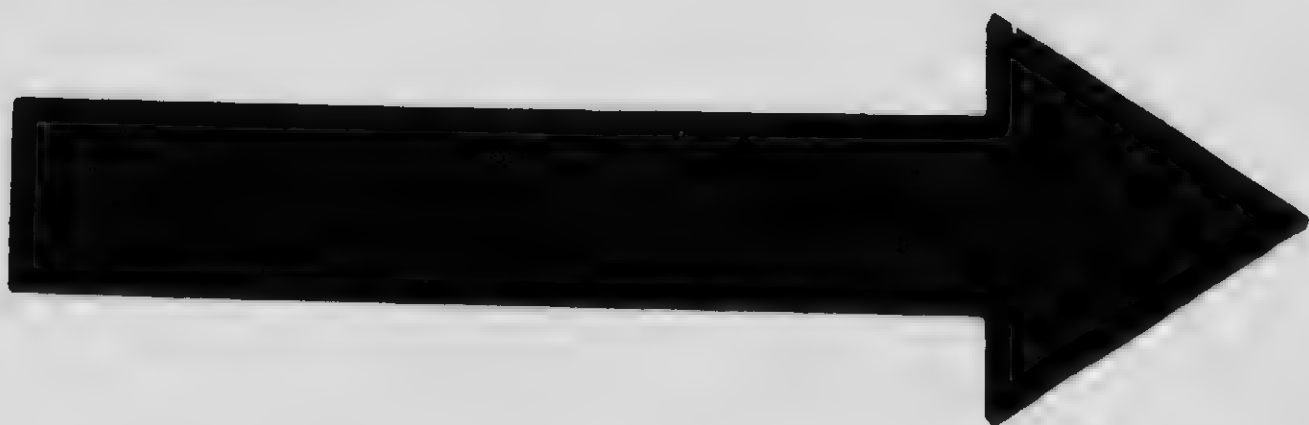
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Nana Dreckett was the only difficulty. She shook her head when her grandson told her of the great honour that had been conferred upon him for, said she, "Race-horse bring man to destruction sooner or later, for if it doan bruck him neck, it will surely bruck him pocket."

In her heart she felt almost as proud as did her brother, but holding fast to her belief in Cousin 'Lizbet's prophesy, her conscience told her that the race-course was not exactly a suitable place for the training of a mighty preacher; so Constantine had to come and plead for the boy and in the end Nana's consent was wrung from her because she hated to refuse her brother anything.

For the three days preceding the races, Quamin's work was handed over to another boy, and the jockey lived in the stable with Samuel's mare, watching with eager eyes the groom and trainer's every movement, getting by heart all the lore of the negro racing stable; while Harry continued to feed the pigs and



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## The Story of Quamin

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milk the cows with the grudge against his more favoured rival seething in his heart. At the same time he took a deep interest in Samuel's mare and never wearied of listening to Quamin's eager recital of all that went on.

"But de chiefes' t'ing," said Quamin to him one day, "is de obeah, an' dat Missa Samuel goin' get from Guinea Bill Monday night."

"Chow!" exclaimed Harry, "Samuel too foolish 'bout obeah. Him better keep him money to buy corn for de mare, for Guinea Bill obeah doan any use."

"Hush!" said Quamin, glancing hurriedly around, "teck care, him hear you."

"Since me doan believe in obeahman, w'at needs me care if him hear me or not?"

"Since w'en you doan believe in obeahman?" asked Quamin in surprise. "T'ink you did ask me yesterday if Massa Samuel not goin' get obeah work 'pon him mare, for if dat doan done, him never can win de race."

"Den you did n't see dat it was fun I

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## Obeah

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meckin' wid you?" said Harry with a little forced laugh.

Quamin eyed his companion in slight astonishment, then he said solemnly.

"Better not call obeahman name in vain, or him will get vex' an' ketch you shadder in a bottle, den you will stiff dead before Pattoo wake."

Harry tried to laugh but Quamin's warning sent a cold chill through him; and pretending that he had forgotten some duty which must be performed before Constantine came home, made it an excuse for leaving in a hurry, and before Quamin had time to say any more on the subject of obeah.

Monday night descended as dark as the darkest heart or deed could wish and Samuel tremblingly put five shillings into his pocket, and concealing under his ragged coat a pint of rum, this being the price of Guinea Bill's ministrations, left the house shortly before midnight and took the road to the obeahman's haunt.

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## The Story of Quamin

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Arrived here, everything was as still as the grave, and no gleam of light shone from within to give evidence of Guinea Bill's vigil.

As Samuel knocked softly at the door, something whizzed past his face and the thought that it might be an evil spirit sent by its master to see who was at the door, made him bold to knock again and whisper hoarsely.

"It 's me, Samuel, Guinea Bill, I beg you to open de door, sah."

His request was granted and there stood the great magician himself holding a little tin lamp high above his head that its beams might fall on the face of the man outside.

"Come in," he said quietly, and Samuel entered the hut while the wizard shut the door and putting the little tin lamp down on the solitary table which stood in the centre of the room, seated himself, motioning Samuel to do the same.

With trembling lips and more than one halt, the man told of his mare Bees Wing and



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## Obeah

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the intended race, ending his tale with a request to Guinea Bill to work obeah and insure his horse winning the race.

When the pennkeeper had finished, the obeahman rose without making any reply, and went into the sleeping room at the back of the hut, taking with him the little lamp and leaving Samuel alone in almost total darkness.

He had not been gone many minutes when a streak of light flashed through the gloom and disappeared as suddenly as it had come. Again and again it came and went and Samuel's hair rose on his head and his knees knocked together. This was more than he had bargained for and he rushed to the door to seek refuge outside, but the return of Guinea Bill with the lamp calmed the man's over-strained nerves enough to enable him to return to his seat and receive in exchange for his five shillings and bottle of rum a small vial containing some white fluid, a black bottle securely corked, and a round tobacco

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## The Story of Quamin

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tin, the lid of which was tied down with a piece of white cotton cloth.

As he handed each one to Samuel, he gave with it full directions for its use, saying in conclusion.

"Dere now, I done me bes' for you an' w'en de race is over, I expec' a present of a young shoat for me sarvices."

"All right, Guinea," said Samuel, "if Bees Wing win, I can weil able to give you a pig 'pon top of de five shillin' an' de rum, for de purse is twenty poun'."

"Dat 's a lot of money, Samuel, a lot of money. Since you gettin' so much, I t'ink I ought to get a young barra pig to match de shoat, for it is all t'rough de obeah I give you dat you horse goin' win."

Samuel's face fell. The price was already enough, but he dared not provoke the wrath of the magician by refusing his demands, so he said, "All right," and vanished into the darkness before any further extortion could fall upon him.

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## Obeah

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Guinea Bill closed the door, and setting his lamp on the table, sat down smiling to himself. Seeing the bottle of rum at his elbow, he drew the cork and putting the bottle to his lips drank a goodly draught, which seemed entirely satisfactory, as he smacked his lips and drew his ragged sleeve across his mouth, saying, "Bes' rum meckin' now-a-days, wonder w're dat nigger get it?"

A knock at the door put an end to his soliloquy and he rose to see who this second visitor could be.

It was Harry—Harry who had stood outside in the rain with eyes glued to a hole in the wattled walls of the hut throughout Samuel's visit and whose lantern had made the flashlight which had so alarmed the pennkeeper.

He came in now, all dripping, his yellow face grown grey with the cold of the night and the effort to control his fears.

"W'at you come for now?" the wizard demanded of the boy in whom he saw no

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## The Story of Quamin

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such profitable client as the pennkeeper had been.

Harry was almost too frightened to answer, but instinct told him the way to Guinea Bill's favour, and putting his hand into his pocket, he drew forth six shillings.

The old man was mollified.

"Sit down," he said more kindly, and Harry obeyed, for he had been standing so long that he was tired out. After a few minutes of silence during which Harry had gathered a little courage, the old man urged the boy to speak and tell his errand, and Harry began.

First he told of his hatred of Quamin without mentioning the name of his enemy, then of the proposed race and his earnest desire that the horse his rival rode should not win, and lastly his hope that the obeahman would help him to this latter end.

The wizard listened, his small black eyes aglow, and when the boy had finished, knew more than Harry had intended or desired.

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## Obeah

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"All right, me son, I can give you w'at you want, but how you goin' to put de obeah 'pon de horse, I doan know, for de pill I goin' give you mus' go into de horse gullet de night before de race, an' you know how dem watch race-horse dat night!"

"Never min' dat, Guinea Bill, I will manage dat part of de business if you only give me de pill."

Once again the magician departed to the room at the rear of the hut, but this time he did not remain away long. Returning, he gave Harry a large pill box and taking off the lid, displayed to the boy's eager gaze a large, white pill.

"Jus' before one o'clock de night before de race, you mus' put dat pill down de horse t'roat an' him will never able to gallop a half a mile nex' day."

This was all that Harry wanted, and delighted with the success of his mission, he put the money into the ever ready palm of Guinea Bill and followed Samuel into the night.

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## The Story of Quamin

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The obeahman, left alone once more, took another drink of rum, then blew out his light and got into the rickety wooden frame with its mattress of straw, which he dignified by the name of bed, muttering as he 'did so,

"Dat boy mus' have t'ief dat money, for I know dat Constantine only pay him shillin' a week an' feedin'."

## VII

### The Roaring Calf

ON Wednesday, Bees Wing, with Samuel the owner, James the trainer, and Daniel Belteshazzar the jockey, betook themselves to Savannah-la-Mar where the little mare was lodged in a vacant stable of a friend of Samuel's where she was jealously guarded and no one allowed to see her unless escorted by Samuel himself.

On Wednesday, too, Harry came to Constantine with a petition for leave to go home as his mother was very sick, in fact not expected to live long.

"Dat 's funny t'ing," said Constantine in surprise. "I see you moder end of las' week, an' not'in' did n't do her."

"Is a sudden sickness she teck, Busha, an'

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## The Story of Quamin

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is only 'bout a hour gone dat one gal passin' and tell me."

"Well, I suppose you have to go, but I doan know how I goin' manage widout you an' Quamin too. You mus' come back in de marnin,' you hear?"

"All right, Busha, I will, sah, dat is to say if me moder doan dead, sah, an' thank you kindly. But Busha," the boy continued, as Constantine turned his mule towards the stable, "I beg you advance me two week wages, sah, so as I can buy a couple of fowl to meck soup for me moder. Sorry to ask you de favour, but how she poor, me moder might dead for want of little nourishment."

Constantine hesitated for a moment, then his naturally kind heart prevailed and he said.

"Come up to de house den, an' I will give you de money."

So, when the pigs were fed and a few other small duties attended to, Harry dressed himself in his best clothes and taking with him



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## The Roaring Calf

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a heavy cattle chain, started out; but the road he selected was the one which led to Savannah-la-Mar and not to his dying mother's bedside.

When a few miles from the place and out of sight and knowledge of Constantine, he hailed a passing cart and begged the driver a seat which was not refused, and so he drove to his destination, getting there at sundown.

Tuppee worth of "plunkas" or very solid gingerbread, bought at a wayside booth, and a drink from the river, was all he needed for the night, and by dint of judicious questioning having discovered the location of Samuel's stable, he now proceeded thither by a circuitous route, fearing lest Quamin or one of the others should see him and ask inconvenient questions.

At the back of the stable there was a large pasture, thickly studded with mango trees; into one of these Harry climbed and from thence could watch every movement around the stable, himself unseen.

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## The Story of Quamin

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Here he perched until it had grown quite dark, then he slid nimbly down the tree trunk and crept up to the back of the rickety building over which he drew his hand as far up as he could reach then down to the ground. In the right hand corner he found what he sought, a loose board about two feet high; this he lifted just a little and decided that it could easily be dislodged altogether, and also the board next to it.

This was satisfactory, and Harry retired once more to the recesses of the mango tree, there to bide the hour set by the obeah-man.

As the clock on the Court House of Savannah-la-Mar struck the hour of midnight, the boy drew from his pocket a small bottle of cocoanut oil, a piece of bread, and a penknife; lastly, he drew forth also the box containing the pill; then he proceeded to undress and apply the oil to his entire body. This done, he wound the chain round his waist, securing it there, and taking the pen-

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## The Roaring Calf

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knife, bread, and obeah pill with him descended the tree.

In Bees Wing's stable all was quiet, and the lantern hanging on a nail against the boarding revealed the pretty little mare standing at ease, her head drooped in sleep. On either side of her sat James and Quamin, who, secure in the knowledge that there was a stout padlock on the inside of the door, were snatching what sleep they could before Samuel, who had gone into the town to see how the bets were going, should return.

Removing the loose board from the back of the stable, Harry now crawled in, peering around to satisfy himself that the watchers were really asleep. He crept up to Bees Wing and patted her softly on the nose, then he held a morsel of bread out to her, and she, recognising the boy, and being very partial to bread, took the proffered piece. Just then the chain came loose and rattled to the ground, the mare snorted and drew back, and James and Quamin jumped

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## The Story of Quamin

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to their feet. Quamin, making a grab at the figure standing there, seized Harry by the wrist, but the sudden pain of a stab made him release his hold, and both boys saw a four-legged animal dragging a heavy chain gallop to the back of the stable and disappear.

Quamin nearly fainted between pain and fright.

"Oh! Lard God, Missa James, is Rowlin' Calf," he gasped, and James no less terrified had no consolation to offer.

Quamin sank to the ground where he remained, the blood streaming from his arm, while James crouched beside him, too frightened to move.

Fortunately Samuel's arrival was not long delayed, but he had to knock more than once before James could muster enough courage to open the door.

The pennkeeper, thinking the watchers had been asleep, began to scold, but James hurriedly told of the encounter with the

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## The Roaring Calf

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Roaring Calf, and his anger turned into amazement.

"W'ere is Quamin?" he asked anxiously.

"See him lyin' down dere, sah. De Rowlin' Calf lick him teet' into de boy arm au' him mos' bleedin' to deat'."

"W'at a t'ing now! W'at a trouble on me poor boy now! Quamin, Quamin!" he called, stooping over the boy lantern in hand, but Quamin did not answer.

"Lard! Missa Samuel, him dead already, sah," ejaculated James.

Samuel set the lantern down and ripping up the blood soaked sleeve of the wounded boy, bound up the gash in his arm with all the skill at his command and a few strips torn from the tail of Quamin's shirt. This done, he brought water and poured a few drops between the boy's lips and bathed his face.

The disabled jockey began to revive under this treatment and at last sat up, staring around him wildly.

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## The Story of Quamin

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"W'ere me is? W'at's matter wid me?" he asked fearfully.

"You better now?" said Samuel; adding, "Drink dis; it will give you heart."

He held a small tin cup to Quamin's lips and the boy drank eagerly. Somewhat revived, his memory of what had occurred returned, and he examined his bandaged arm while listening with great satisfaction to James's second account of the affair, in which the Roaring Calf had grown to enormous proportions, the length of its teeth requiring a yard stick to measure them.

There was no more sleep in Bees Wing's stable that night; the blood curdling adventure through which the two boys had passed was in itself enough to drive away sleep, but what occupied Samuel's mind still more was, who would ride his mare now that Quamin was disabled? It was clear the boy would not be able to do so, for he had lost much blood and was too weak to stand; so Samuel pondered the matter until dawn when he

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## The Roaring Calf

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went out to see if another jockey could be found among his many acquaintances in the Bay.

After the pennkeeper's departure, James built a fire a few yards from the stable on which he boiled water to make coffee, taking a generous canful to Quamin with a piece of stale bun he had bought the day before. There was no milk in the coffee but Quamin derived not a little strength and refreshment from the hot beverage, and even managed to eat the bun. Then he asked for the pennkeeper and James told him on what errand Samuel had gone abroad.

"You t'ink him will get anybody?" asked Quamin eagerly.

"I doan believe so, for all de jockya engage to ride oder horse, an' mos' of de boy 'bout here too heavy or too 'fraid to ride race."

Quamin dropped back on the horse blanket on which he had lain throughout the night, seemingly quite satisfied with this answer.

As James predicted, Samuel returned dis-

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## The Story of Quamin

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appointed. All who were willing to ride were too heavy, for though the race was to be ridden "catch weight," Bees Wing's owner had no intention of doing any voluntary handicapping.

"De Lard only know w'at I goin' to do dis day," he said, throwing himself on a box in one corner of the stable. "Dat man John Rill mus' be set a terrible powerful obeah for me, an' now I jus' as good as los' de race."

"Missa Samuel, sah," came a low voice from Quamin's couch, "don't bodder you head 'bout it, sah, for I goin' ride Bees Wing if I drop dead de nex' minit."

Samuel turned with a start to look at the boy, but one sight of his ashen face dispelled this flicker of hope.

"Boy, doan talk foolishness. If you moder rise from de dead an' come here now, she would n't favour duppy more dan you, so w'at 's de use you talk 'bout ride race?"

"Never min' if me look like duppy, Missa Samuel, me doan dead yet. I beg you to



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## The Roaring Calf

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meck James clean de bit an' t'ings for me, an' by twelve o'clock I get up."

"Bery well, Quamin; me never hear dat duppy ride race-horse, but since you min' set 'pon it an' I goin' los' de race any fashion, you can meck de trial, but if you dead doan blame me."

Quamin lay back satisfied and Samuel turned his attention to the mare.

"But, Missa Samuel," said James, looking up suddenly from the animal's shining flanks which he had been busily polishing, "you mus' has to put strong obeah 'pon Bees Wing you know, sah."

"Dat 's de bery t'ing I goin' after now," returned Samuel; "but w'at meck you say so?"

"You know dat yawse foot boy from Beauford, sah?"

"De one dat run 'way from him moder because she say she goin' boil him foot to cure de yawse?"

"Same one, sah."

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## The Story of Quamin

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"Yes, I know him well."

"Bery well den, Missa Samuel, dat boy workin' in John Rill stable an' him say is wonderful all de obeah Missa Rill an' John Bailey workin' 'pon dat animal. Every time dem teck him out for trial, dem give him a pill, an' jus' as him come back to de stable dem lick a cordial down him t'roat. Benny say, not a bird can fly faster dan dat horse can gallop."

Samuel frowned.

"Put you elbow grease 'pon de horse neck, me boy; dat is de place too heavy," he said; then continued unconcernedly, "W'at else dem doin'?"

"Benny say las' night w'en dem t'ink him was sleepin', dem meck de trial wid de basket an' de basket give de race to Canalstick. But me doan care 'bout dat because Quamin an' me did try de basket for Bees Wing las' night before de Rowlin' Calf come, an' de basket say Bees Wing goin' win."

"Same t'ing de plantain sucker say too!"

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## The Roaring Calf

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exclaimed Samuel triumphantly, "but I doan know how Quamin goin' ride, an' dat's de truth."

James was silent and went on cleaning the mare. When the last speck of dust had vanished, he took the brush and passed it up and o'er the hind quarters of the mare who showed some disposition to kick; however, James kept well out of the way of her heels and repeated the operation again and again.

"W'at you rumplin' up de mare like dat for?" asked Samuel, astonished and annoyed.

"It's de 'cush' I givin' her, sah," replied James. "Benny tell me 'bout it how Missa Rill doin' it to Canalstick, an' I t'ink I might as well do so wid Bees Wing, aldough I can't say w'at de mare want wid it."

"Dat to meck de horse lively," said Samuel, who in truth knew no more than James, but would not admit his ignorance.

At twelve o'clock all was ready, and Samuel led the little mare out of the stable, followed by James carrying bridle and saddle,

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## The Story of Quamin

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and Quamin almost too weak to walk, but full of determination and dressed in his gaudy jockey suit.

At the race-course they found the rival, Candlestick, already installed under the shade of a spreading logwood tree. They selected the next best tree and tied Bees Wing to one of its branches, then James threw down his burden and Quamin fell rather than lay down to gather what strength he could for the coming ordeal.

A crowd had already assembled and many came to examine the mare and compare her with her rival and not a few to find out who Samuel had got for jockey.

Quamin feigned sleep and so left the answering of questions to Samuel who told how the boy had been miraculously cured by a lotion of his, Samuel's, concoction, while James recited again and again the story of the Roaring Calf, keeping a strict watch the while that no one came near enough to the mare to harm her.

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## The Roaring Calf

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When everything was ready and the order to saddle up gone forth Samuel proceeded to render the last services of obeah to his animal, James holding her head. First a cordial was poured down her throat which she seemed to relish not a little; then a lotion smelling of assafoetida was rubbed on her mane and tail, and lastly her hoofs were scraped free of dirt and plastered with an ointment, bright blue in colour and of an indescribable odour.

"My God! Missa Samuel," James exclaimed, holding his nose, "dat stink 'nough to do good, sah."

"Strong obeah, me son, always have strong smell," returned Samuel, while Quamin sat up and spat on the ground, then walked away for a few yards to stretch his legs and escape the vile odour of Samuel's magic.

Finally the saddle was put upon Bees Wing and Quamin slowly swung himself upon her back; then they went to present the mare to the judge.

As there was no weighing to be done, the

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## The Story of Quamin

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ceremony was soon over and Bees Wing and her rival, Candlestick, their noses covered with white handkerchiefs to protect each from chances of being obeahed by the other, stood in line beside the starter.

The garb of these jockeys was fantastic to a degree. Neither wore jackets, but shirts of contrasting colour to the short trousers of brilliant hue which were tucked into long striped stockings. At all costs the jockey must protect himself from the chances of air getting under his clothing and blowing him from his horse, so, in place of the usual cap, a handkerchief tied over the ears and under the chin is substituted.

The white bandage made Quamin's face more corpse-like than ever, while John Bailey, his rival, a diminutive negro man of uncertain age, looked for all the world like a circus monkey.

In breathless expectation, the eyes of the crowd are riveted on the starter until he drops his flag, then away go the horses glad

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## The Roaring Calf

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to be free, and the tongues of the multitude follow.

Up at the winning post, which they must pass thrice the course not being long enough, there is a struggle and a roar, "Dem comin'! dem comin'!"

Candlestick leads, and those who have placed their bets on John Rill's horse shout, "Canalstick! Canalstick! Did n't I say so? Chow! Bees Wing never ketch him to-day."

But Bees Wing's backers were not so easily discouraged, and retaliate: "Wait, only wait little an' see w'at you see."

Samuel glanced uneasily at Quamin's face as the jockeys flashed past, but gathered from it neither hope nor yet despair; the boy looking straight ahead, appeared to be unconscious of everything save the animal he was riding.

Once more round the course and yet again to complete the mile; as they near the winning post for the last time, Candlestick is still

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## The Story of Quamin

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leading and Samuel has resigned himself to defeat.

"Canalstick! Canalstick!" shouts the crowd, and as if in answer to the call, out flashes Quamin's whip, down it comes on the little mare's shoulder, and she is neck and neck with her antagonist. One more cut with the whip and Bees Wing has bounded past the winning post half a length ahead of Candlestick, whose jockey does his best with whip and spur, but his mount has no reserve energy to be called forth.

Amid a crowd of excited spectators, Bees Wing is led by Samuel up to the judge's stand to be declared winner of the first heat, the next to be run in quarter of an hour.

Once more under the logwood tree, Quamin slips to the ground and seats himself with his back against the trunk, while James, bubbling over with joyous excitement, unsaddles and rubs dry the little mare; after which Samuel administers another cordial, the



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## The Roaring Calf

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saddle is on again, and Bees Wing enters the list once more.

Quamin, as he mounts, feels that the bandage on his wounded arm is growing wetter every minute and knows that he must win this heat also or lose the race, for he cannot ride another.

From the start it is evident that Candlestick's jockey has learnt a lesson from his opponent and is riding carefully, so that when they pass the winning post the two horses are side by side, and the whips of both jockeys are idle. Quamin urges his mount a little, so does the other, and the boy feels he has met his match.

Round they come, and now the crowd is wild; shouts of "Canalstick! Canalstick!" "Bees Wing! Bees Wing!" rend the air and it is no longer a question of finesse, but each must ride his fastest, for here once more is the winning post. Candlestick shoots forward and Bees Wing follows, but John Rill's horse has the advantage; seeing this,

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## The Story of Quamin

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Quamin, grown desperate, rises in his stirrups and shouts to his mount,

"Go on Bees Wing! Go on!"

In gallant response, the little beast again bounds forward and is over the line in front of her antagonist and ready to be led to the judge's stand, this time to be declared winner of the twenty pound purse.

The judge is addressing a few words of congratulation to Quamin when the boy suddenly sways in his saddle, and before any one can realise what is happening, has fallen to the ground in a dead faint.

"Him dead! him dead," went up from the bystanders who crowded round the prostrate boy to the exclusion of any air, until the judge, coming from his stand, quietly motioned away the curious and sent a constable for the doctor.

"Heat and excitement," this latter says as he bends over Quamin to sprinkle his face with water, then a red stain on the boy's shirt draws his attention. "What is

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## The Roaring Calf

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this?" he demands of Samuel, as he rips up the sleeve.

"Is Rowlin' Calf bite him dere, Doctah," Samuel explains.

"Rowlin' Calf!" repeats the man of medicine scornfully. "More like a knife blade," he went on, examining the wound which bled profusely.

His bag is soon brought from his buggy, where it ever reposes ready for any emergency, some brandy given to Quamin who is scarce yet conscious, and a fresh and more scientific bandage put upon his arm. This done, the doctor draws out his note book and turning to Samuel, says:

"Now I mean to get to the bottom of this thing. That wound was made by the bite of a penknife."

Samuel shook his head and cast a despairing glance at his neighbours in protest at the "Bockra's" incredulity; then he called James, but the doctor was not to be convinced and the crowd dispersed, wondering, to discuss

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## The Story of Quamin

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the relative merits of the Roaring Calf and penknife theories.

Quamin was lifted into the cart which had brought Harry down and which good fortune or the curiosity of the driver had directed to the race-course. Samuel took a seat beside the driver and James perched on behind, from whence he could easily lead Bees Wing.

Thus did the little procession return, exultant and yet sorrowful, for it was clear that Quamin was very ill.

## VIII

### Gossip

THE way was long and uphill, and mules at best are slow, so it was nine o'clock before the cart stopped at Nana Dreckett's cottage door, which the old woman herself opened in answer to Samuel's knock.

As the light from the lamp she carried fell on the pennkeeper, she started and the lamp almost fell from her hand.

"Is him dead?" she whispered hoarsely, before the man had time to speak.

"Hi! no, Nana, not dead exactly, ma'm, but him meet wid a' accident. I very sorry, Nana, but could n't be helped, ma'm."

Of his excuses she took no heed, but throwing wide the door, passed swiftly out to the cart where Quamin lay unconscious and breathing heavily.

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## The Story of Quamin

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"I did say so! I did say so!" she muttered, then turning to Samuel she demanded, "W'at meck you stan' up dere like you petrify? You want to meck de boy dead out dere in de cart? Lif' him up an' bring him into de house."

The men obeyed, the old woman leading the way with her little oil lamp.

"Get out of dat bed, you lazy ole debbil!" she shouted at Fathé Dreckett who, just awake, was sitting up amazed at the confusion. He shuffled out without a word of protest and stood stupidly by while the penn-keeper and his groom laid the boy on the bed thus left empty for his reception, and as briefly as they could told the story of Quamin's misadventure.

She listened attentively, and when they had finished, said,

"W'en you go to de yard, tell Constantine to sen' to Whithorn for de doctah to-marra: him goin' vaccinate dere."

"Yes, Nana. Good-night, ma'm," said

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## Gossip

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Samuel meekly, but the old woman was in no mood to remember her manners and had already begun to undress her charge.

Her husband continued to stand looking on, not daring to ask a question, and when his withered old legs, which shot from under the short day shirt in which he had slept, like mahogany posts from under a white canopy, grew weary, he sat down on a salt fish box and continued his observation.

"Get up," shouted his wife, "you lazy ole Be'lzebub! Get up an' go make up de fire; de boy cole as lizzard an' I mus' give him some ginger tea or him will dead."

"Meck I get me trousers firs'," mumbled the old man, and groping around till he found the missing garment, stole out with it under his arm.

Nana spent the night by Quamin's bedside, and at dawn Constantine, filled with anxiety, came riding on his mule to ask for news of his godson.

"He is nigh unto deat' an' if de doctah doan

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## The Story of Quamin

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come soon, he won't live t'rough de day," his sister told him reproachfully though she knew it was an exaggeration.

"Is dat de truth, Nana? Poor boy! poor Quamin!" exclaimed the man whose affection for his godson was very real.

Nana offered him a seat and the two sat down to talk the matter over.

While they were thus occupied, in walked Cousin 'Lizbet' with Ruth Deborah trotting at her side, and of course the story had to be gone over again to this new audience.

"But w'at is bringin' Rowlin' Calf so common roun' 'bout now?" Nana Dreckett inquired. "On'y las' week I hear dat a boy see one near to Guinea Bill house, an' de very nex' day he was strong 'pon fits an' mos' died."

"Mus' be de wickedness of dis generation growin' up," said Cousin 'Lizbet', shaking her head; "it is awful de sin an' wickedness dat doin' now wid t'iefin' an' lyin' so common; de Lard sen' de Rowlin' Calf as a plague an' a



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## Gossip

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warnin' dat de sinners may be warned to flee from de wrat' to come."

A snigger from Quasheba made her grandmother turn sharply to ask,

"W'at do you, pick'ney?"

"But, Grannie, dem doan worse dan in de before time, for I hear say some of de ole man livin' now did know de inside of prison before dem wisdom teeth cut."

Quasheba sniggered again, and Constantine and Nana exchanged glances, for they knew she referred to an incident in Father Dreckett's early life in which the jail at Lucea had figured prominently.

Cousin 'Lizbet' also knew to whom the little girl alluded, and reprimanded her, saying,

"Hold you' tongue, pick'ney; w'at you know 'bout t'ings happen before you born? Dat was different t'ing from w'at we talkin' 'bout now."

A movement from the bed drew Nana Dreckett to Quamin's side and the boy looking

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## The Story of Quamin

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up at her in his first flash of returning consciousness, felt reassured, and turning over with a sigh of content, fell into a deep, natural sleep.

So he slept until the doctor came and a brief examination went to show that Quamin was better, and only needed time to get quite well.

As he rose to go, the doctor turned to Constantine and said,

"If I were you, I would never rest till I found out who stabbed the boy. Roaring Calf is all nonsense; that wound was made by nothing but a penknife."

Constantine scratched his head and answered nothing; the advice had fallen on ears deaf to such heresy, except in the case of Quasheba whose latent superstitions were held in check by unusually good judgment.

That evening while going a message for her mother, she met Harry and stopped to talk over Quamin's misfortune with him.

"An' you know w'at de doctah say, Harry?" she asked.

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## Gossip

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"No, w'at?" he answered.

"Him say dat de talk 'bout Rowlin' Calf is all nonsense, an' it was somebody juke Quamin wid penknife."

A look of terror crept over Harry's face and Quasheba, who was looking straight at him, felt the knowledge of his guilt flash to her instinctively. For a moment they stood thus speechless, Harry being the first to recover himself.

"Chow!" he said, assuming a fine air of scorn, "how somebody can go t'rough boardin' up if dem is n't duppy? James say de door was well lock an' de Rowlin' Calf come from behin' de stall dem."

"Me doan know for me never see no Rowlin' Calf. You ever see one, Harry?"

"Yes, I see one one day lyin' down dead in de pasture. Light'nin' stri'e him."

"W'at him stan' like?" asked Quasheba, full of interest.

"Him meck like gallawas' but him was too big to be real gallawas' so I know it was

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## The Story of Quamin

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Rowlin' Calf dat change himself into lizard shape an' light'nin' come an' kill him before him could turn back into calf."

"Den you nebber see one in calf body?"

"Yes, one night me an' Quamin go look for de young bull dat broke pasture. It did strong moonlight dat night and jus' as we come to de wall near to Guinea Bill house, we see de big black calf sit down on de wall wid him fire eye shine like moonie [firefly] an' him was 'pon heavy singin' say,

'Do me bredda moon, doan fall down 'pon me,  
Do me bredda moon, doan fall down 'pon me.'

Dem 'fraid for fire, an' if you ever see one, Quasheba, an' you have a fire stick, t'row it after him an' him will run 'way."

"If I ever see one I would frighten unto deat' for I hear say even if dem doan touch you, dem breat' give you fever an' fits; but for all dat I doan believe say dat is Rowlin' Calf bite Quamin."

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## Gossip

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The little girl nodded to emphasise her conviction.

"You is a little fool!" exclaimed Harry wrathfully, giving her a push which sent her flying into the ditch and broke the bottle of cocoanut oil she was carrying.

Quasheba set up a doleful howl, well knowing that she would get a beating on her return home, but when she saw that Harry was laughing at her, sorrow changed to anger, her crying ceased, and picking up the pieces of the bottle, she aimed them with all her force at the boy who ran up the road laughing loudly.

At some distance he sat down to wait for his pursuer, who marched past in dignified silence.

"Hi! Quasheba, I sorry I broke de bottle," he said in apology, but the little girl was not to be so easily appeased.

"I hope de debbil ketch you to-night an' roas' you in hell, for you doan better dan Cuffee-foot dem heng at de Bay for killin' de gal."

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## The Story of Quamin

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"W'at you mean?" demanded Harry sharply, all his gaiety gone.

"I mean say is you an' not a soul else dat put knife into Quamin."

Harry was dumbfounded. How could she know that?

"Who tell you such a lie?" he gasped feebly.

"Never min'. Dat is for me business. I will tell dat to de constab when I see him." This was all the information he was destined to receive at present.

The little girl told her mother the story of the broken bottle and as she had expected, got a whipping, but when her mother added the further punishment of no dinner, she cried herself to sleep in a corner of the room and vowed vengeance on Harry, the cause of her trouble.

## IX

### School Days

QUAMIN'S naturally robust constitution made his recovery very rapid, and with returning strength came the desire for the work he had grown to love.

Constantine came and pleaded for him, but Nana was inexorable; the Lord had punished Quamin and herself for her weakness in allowing her grandson to ride a race-horse and now he should sin no more, but go to school to prepare himself for the great "call" which was to come to him by-and-bye.

For the local schoolmaster, she had little respect.

"Dat nigger doan know B from bull-foot," she would say with a sniff of contempt, "yet

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## The Story of Quamin

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him shurance 'nough to ask thrupence a week to teach de children."

So it was decided that he should go to Negril where there was a government school and Nana had a cousin living who would board Quamin in return for his assistance on fishing days.

Her mind once made up, it did n't take her long to prepare her charge. His white duck Sunday suit was carefully laundered and an extra pair of blue jean trousers manufactured out of a pair of Father Dreckett's half-worn ones, needless to say without his consent asked or given; a new pair of boots from the local shoemaker and a new straw hat completed the boy's outfit; it remained only to cut his hair, and this also his grandmother undertook, shearing him for all the world like a sheep with wool of market value.

"W'at kin' of penitentiary cut dat you grannie give you, Quamin?" asked Quasheba when she saw him for the first time after the operation.



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## School Days

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Quamin grinned.

"She cut it short because she say de hot-hot down at Negril more dan here an' maybe me brains turn to ile if me hair too thick. Quasheba, you sorry say I goin' 'way?" concluded Quamin, with a little unusual note of tenderness in his voice.

"Sorry? w'at me to sorry for?" queried the little girl mockingly.

"Hi! you won't have nobody to play wid w'en I gone," said the boy.

"Chow! dere is lots of boy lef' if I did want to play wid dem, but I doan like boy any more, dem too fool. Gal, now, can wear long hair an' dem brains is all right, but boy has to cut dem hair short like t'ief from de jail because dem brains doan wort' an' turn to ile wid little bit of sun-hot."

For a moment Quamin was crushed, but only for a moment, then he said with the air of a philosopher, "I always hear dat gal an' puss is much alike, an' now I know it is de truth; dem is de two 'ceitfulles' t'ing on earth.

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## The Story of Quamin

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I was goin' write you a letter soon as I larn how to write, but I won't bodder again. I gone yah, day-day!" Then with a condescending wave of the hand, he turned to leave her.

Quasheba let him go a few yards and then she ran after him. He had baited his hook well; a letter was too rare a thing to be despised.

"See here, Quamin," she said, proffering a large mango, "perhaps dem doan has mango at Negril."

Quamin, like his forefather, was not proof against such temptation, and peace was restored.

The morning of departure arrived and while the stars were still shining brightly in the heavens, Nana Dreckett and her grandson started on their journey.

It was a good many miles to Negril and an early start imperative if they wished to reach the little town by the sea the same evening.

Quamin's belongings tied up in a large red

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## School Days

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cotton handkerchief were placed in a tray along with a few bread-fruit and plantains which were intended as a gift to the cousin, and the tray deftly balanced on the old woman's head, while over Quamin's shoulder dangled from a long stick the new boots: economy and comfort requiring that they should only be worn on Sunday or other celebrations.

When mid-day was reached and the sun at its height, the pair stopped for rest and refreshment at the house of a friend and resumed their journey early in the afternoon. It was sundown when they passed through the solitary street of the little fishing village and came in sight of the cousin's house which stood a little apart, on a slight rising.

Jehoshaphat, or Cousin Joshy, as he was more often called, met them at the door. He was a fine stalwart negro, broad shouldered and deep chested, with the rugged strength born of many a battle with the salt waves of his native shores.

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## The Story of Quamin

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He shook hands with Nana after helping her down with the tray, then turning to look at Quamin, said,

"So dis is you' gran'son, Cousin Dreckett. Him favour you muchly an' is well grow for him age. How ole is him, mam?" he added as though not quite certain upon this point.

"Him jus' gone ten," replied the grandmother, "an' Constantine say him is de smartes' boy him ever see; but Quamin too love race-horse, an' how he is call by de Lard to be a preacher, I t'ink it better to sen' him to school to larn readin' an' writin' so he will be able to teach de people w'en de time is ripe."

"Ahi! I see," said Cousin Joshy. "Well de quickest way to dat is to larn him de fishin' business; readin' an' writin' is very good, but it is not needful, Cousin, not needful in truth; for you remember how de Lard always choose him disciple from de fisherman, an' not one of dem know how to spell a puss name, much less anyt'ing else."

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## School Days

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Nana pondered the matter a moment, then, as if a sudden decision had been borne in upon her, said,

"Well, de boy can larn de two t'ings: readin' an' writin' at de school in de marnin' an' de fishin' business wid you after dat."

Here the wife of Cousin Joshy made her appearance and rushing at Nana, threw her arms around her neck and kissed, with loud smacks, the thin cheeks of the older woman.

"Cousin Dreckett, it is more dan five year since I see you, an' I glad so tell!"

"Yes, Rose-Mary," replied Nana, "it is gone five year since I see you an' you have wax' fat in de time. Look as dough fish an' salt water 'gree wid you constitution."

Rose-Mary giggled. It was a compliment to be told that she had grown fat, and was a proof of her opulence.

"How come it dat you is so mauger, Nana?" she asked in return.

"Because I belong to de lean kin' dat you read 'bout in de Book; dere is bot' fat an'

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## The Story of Quamin

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lean, an' de Lard sen' his rain upon bot' jus' de same. Come here, Quamin, an' meck you bow to you cousin."

But Quamin was busy exchanging grimaces with a little negro of about his own age, who, from behind the shelter of the kitchen door, was taking stock of all that went on. The second call, however, reached him and he came up to his grandmother's side.

"Put you han' 'pon you belly an' meck a bow," she commanded, and Quamin obeyed literally, at the same time drawing the right foot as far behind the left one as it would go.

"Howdie!" said Rose-Mary, as her eyes measured the boy's proportions and her mind weighed his eating capacity. She was not altogether in favour of this new addition to the family circle, and had only consented to let the boy come when her husband, who put little faith in learning, had promised that her son should share Quamin's educational advantages.

"Is de dinner ready, Rose-Mary?" asked

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## School Days

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Joshy, and in reply the mistress of the house went out to the kitchen to give the pot of callaloe soup a last stir, then she lifted it from the fire and placing it on the kitchen table, which was almost as black as the pot itself, proceeded to ladle out the contents into a row of soup plates; these she set on a wooden tray and returned with them to the house.

Rose-Mary was no pattern housekeeper and deemed the setting of a dinner table a useless labour, so the soup plates were distributed to the company where they sat or stood, Abijah and Quamin choosing the door-step as their vantage ground.

The soup was savoury, and to the weary travellers most refreshing though to Quamin it was a surprise to learn that the salt pork with which the soup had been seasoned was for the elders only, and the youngsters must be satisfied with what they could get of vegetables, or bread-kind, as these are called on the Island. This was something new to the boy

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## The Story of Quamin

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who had always been used to sharing with his grandmother the best that she had.

When the plates were emptied, Rose-Mary collected them and returning them to the tray, told Abijah to go and wash them, as Fibba his sister would not return until late that night.

Abijah obeyed, and invited Quamin to assist.

The washing was carried on outside the kitchen, and while they worked, Abijah regaled Quamin with an account of the capture of a shark. "An' look here, Quamin, as dem lif' him out of de water, him tail jus' fly pas' me so—" said he, illustrating by a wave of his hand which sent the plate he had been wiping spinning to the ground, where it lay in fragments, the two boys staring at it in horrified silence.

Hearing his mother approaching, Abijah recovered himself and shouted,

"Puss! Puss you! Oh! Lard, but w'at a' animal bad."



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## School Days

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Quamin could scarce restrain a grin at this bold attempt to saddle the accident on to the poor half-starved little brindle cat which had been sitting near the boys in the vain hope of a stray piece coming her way. The shouts of Abijah alarmed her and she fled, but Rose-Mary was not in the least deceived: she knew well that the nine lives of a cat were none too many for the weight of blame it was often made to carry.

"No use you 'cuse de puss, for she doan got han' to lif' up plate, yah!" she said, picking up a stick which lay in her path, but Abijah did not wait to hear more, and being too fat for violent exercise, his mother had to content herself with sending after him a volley of threats, and set about cross-questioning Quamin.

"How come Abijah to broke dat plate?" she asked, and Quamin hung his head.

"I don know, ma'm," he replied, "de puss was here an'——"

"Oh! chut," she interrupted. "Doan mix

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## The Story of Quamin

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up de puss name in de affair at all, but tell de truth."

But Quamin was loyal if not truthful, and to all her questions gave the same unsatisfactory answer.

Bed-time comes early in the tropics, and with the negro "early to bed and early to rise" is a motto universally practised. Now Cousin Joshy's house contained but two rooms: the sitting-room or hall, as it was called, and a bedroom at the back where the family slept; so a few sacks were spread in a corner of the hall for the master of the house, while Nana took his place in the small wooden four-poster beside Rose-Mary, under which the two boys crept to sleep as only little niggers can.

With daylight the household was once more astir and Abijah took Quamin to the sea-shore to see the seine hauled in. Here he was the observed of all observers, and the little naked boys who dived under to release the net whenever it should get caught on

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## School Days

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the rocks came out of the water all wet and shiny to see Abijah's cousin from the mountains.

When the catch, which after all was no great one, consisting chiefly of very small and brightly coloured fishes and some eels, was safely landed and divided among the crowd who gathered to watch proceedings, Abijah proposed a swim, to which Quamin eagerly consented, though he had never before bathed in anything bigger than a pond. Abijah, on the contrary, rivalled the fishes and cut all sorts of capers in the water, to the astonishment and admiration of the boy from the mountains.

When they returned to the house, Rose-Mary was just sharing out the first repast of the morning consisting of a beverage of new sugar and hot water and some slices of bread-fruit heated on the gridiron.

Fibba had also returned and was seated on a stone by the kitchen door holding her can of "tea" in one hand, with the other re-

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## The Story of Quamin

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straining the cat who sought to share her meal. She was an ordinary looking little black girl whose scanty crop of wool had been divided into four, like the markings on a hot cross bun, each section plaited so tightly that it was a wonder the roots endured; a quiet, peace-loving little creature with only the average share of intelligence, and Abijah's slave, ready to fetch and carry for the big brother, deeming submission the whole duty of woman. Unfortunately, Abijah often abused this devotion, and teased her unmercifully. She looked up quickly as the two boys came round the corner of the house but remained quietly on her seat.

"Hi! Fibba, why meck you did n't come home las' night?" inquired her brother.

"Because Grannie say she did n't have nobody to sen' wid me an' I could n't come me so-so one."

"'Fraid, eh?" inquired Abijah.

"Yes," candidly owned the little girl,

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## School Days

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"dem duppy w'at live at seaside is de wors'es' kin', an' I 'fraid to meet one."

Abijah laughed and Quamin chimed in with his opinion of the dangers of Roaring Calves and duppies in general and the question was discussed between the three, Fibba forgetting her shyness in the absorbing interest of the theme, until Nana Dreckett called Quamin to get dressed for school.

The two boys were taken into the room where they were scrubbed and dressed, then turned loose with the admonition to "teck care an' not dirty you'self."

At eight-thirty the party, consisting of Quamin and his grandmother, Rose-Mary and her son and daughter, set out for the schoolhouse which stood on a hill ten minutes' walk from Cousin Joshy's.

From every direction streamed children of all ages and sizes, for the negro is not slow to avail himself of the free education offered by the government to all under fourteen years of age, and the little band did credit

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## The Story of Quamin

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to their parents, for all were neat and clean and many were well dressed.

Arrived at the schoolhouse, they filed in: the old scholars to their respective places, the new to a bench at the door, there to await the teacher's decision as to where they should be placed.

To Quamin there was something like solemnity in the occasion and he longed for the lessons to begin that he might the sooner keep his promise to Quasheba; while to Abijah, the whole thing was a grand picnic which, so far, he had found very amusing. For learning he had neither desire nor aptitude, and the only call which appealed to him was the call to meals. Abijah was pure animal.

Leaving the boys with many instructions as to behaviour, the two women turned homewards with Fibba trotting beside them.

The little girl was very quiet and a close observer might have detected tears shining in her big brown eyes. She longed to remain behind with the boys and learn to read too,

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## School Days

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but the idea of education being necessary to girls as well as boys had not yet penetrated Rose-Mary's mind.

When the others had gone into the house, Fibba chose a quiet spot under the shade of a large tree, and taking Miss Elsie in her arms, poured out her woe to the little animal who seemed to understand that its mistress was unhappy and sought to console her by rubbing itself against her little tear-stained face, mewling feebly the while.

Fortunately for the child's peace of mind, a solution of the difficulty was near at hand, for Quamin proved an apt scholar and gladly passed on to her the knowledge gained at school as quickly as he acquired it.

## X

### The Passing of Father Dreckett

**A**FTER a visit of a few days, Nana went home alone, missing her grandson sorely, but unselfishly determined to give him every advantage in her power; but unfortunately her charity did not extend to Father Dreckett, who had to bear the brunt of her sufferings in added persecution so that the lines in his withered old face deepened and his walk became more than ever slouchy and dejected, until at last it stopped altogether.

The old man was no longer able to drag himself up and down between the house and kitchen, but sat on the door-step of the former, his short clay pipe in his mouth, his old hat drawn low over his eyes, and an expression like that of the Sphinx, utterly incomprehensible.



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## The Passing of Father Dreckett

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Now that he was almost helpless, Nana's manner softened a little and she saw to it that neither his stomach nor the little pipe went long empty.

One morning, when she returned from a foraging expedition, she found the old man sitting propped up against the door-post, the pipe gone from between his lips. Thinking he slept, and fearing that he might fall down the steps and be hurt, she took him by the shoulder and with a gentle shake, said,

"Fader Dreckett! Fader Dreckett, wake up, you hear?"

But Father Dreckett did not hear, and stooping to peer into the face screened by the battered old hat, Nana looked into the half-open eyes of her dead husband. Throwing her apron over her head, she fled in the direction of Cousin 'Lizbet's cottage.

"Fear not, Nana, fear not!" said the prophetess as she walked by the widowed woman back to the house of death. "de Lard

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## The Story of Quamin

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giveth an' de Lard taketh away again, blessed be de name of de Lard."

"Cousin 'Lizbet'," sobbed Nana, "him is a blessed angel in Heaven dis minit, an' I glad for dat; but how I can do widout him? For forty year we live togedder an' now he is gone. Lard have mercy upon me!"

Arrived at the house, the two women lifted the emaciated frame on to the bed from which the living man had once been driven to make room for Quamin, and preparations for the washing of the corpse were soon under way.

Quasheba had been despatched to tell the news to Constantine, and on the way had distributed it broadcast to the whole countryside, so that by the time the Busha's mule stopped at Nana Dreckett's door, the little house was already full of visitors, all struggling to get a close look at the dead body of the man with whom in life they had had little to do.

Nana sat by the corpse with her apron over

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## The Passing of Father Dreckett

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her head, swaying herself back and forth and wailing, "Oh! me poor husban' dead an' gone from me. De bes' man anybody ever see. Fader! Fader! w'at I goin' to do widout you?" while Cousin 'Lizbet' standing beside her, murmured scraps of Biblical verse, such as, "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord. I will repay—I will repay," adding, "Remember dat, my sister, an' be comforted," and it was thus that Constantine found them when he entered.

"An' poor Quamin so far away," exclaimed Nana to her brother. "I doan know how he will be able to come to de funeral."

"I will see to dat," answered Constantine. "I will sen' a messenger to Cousin Joshy right off, an' if dem want to come to de funeral, dem can walk all night an' get here by ten o'clock to-marra marnin'. Parson Blackgrove too, mus' be notify. De funeral better be 'bout two o'clock, eh, Sister?"

"Yes, dat is de time dem mostly bury," answered the widow in crushed tones.

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## The Story of Quamin

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Constantine produced a foot rule from his pocket and measured the corpse; then he drew from under the bed some large cedar boards which had lain in hiding, waiting for just such an emergency as this. These, with the help of one of the spectators he carried outside and gave in charge of the carpenter who had accompanied him, with directions for the making of the coffin, then mounting, he rode quickly home to despatch the messenger to Cousin Joshy.

Harry, the one selected, was soon in the saddle and galloping away in hot haste towards Negril, with the sad news.

The sun had set when he arrived there and Cousin Joshy and family just finishing the evening meal.

Quamin recognised his godfather's mule first, and then the rider, and bounding towards them, asked in hot haste,

"W'at bring you here, Harry?"

"You' gran'fader dead an' dem sen' me come tell you. You' gran'moder want you to

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## The Passing of Father Dreckett

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start right off an' come to de funeral," was the answer.

"W'at de boy sayin'?" inquired Cousin Joshy coming forward, but Quamin, quite overcome by this, his first near acquaintance with death, could only stand gaping in wonder while Harry replied to the question.

"So de ole man die dis marnin'!" said Cousin Joshy, taking off his hat and scratching his head. "W'en is de buryin'?" he inquired.

"At two o'clock to-marra, sah," replied Harry, and the man reflecting for a moment, turned to Rose-Mary who had by this time joined the group, and said,

"De shop cart goin' to de Bay to-night an' we could get a drive in it as far as dat."

The thought of such an outing delighted Rose-Mary and the children who jumped for joy, all except Quamin, still a little sobered by his recent bereavement, and when the shop cart set out on its journey at one o'clock

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## The Passing of Father Dreckett

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in the morning, the party of mourners were promptly on hand.

"W'at you carryin', Fibba?" asked Abijah, pointing to a paper parcel of queer shape that the little girl had under her arm.

"Neber min'; dat is for me business," said his sister crossly, turning her back on him.

"Come meck we see," whispered Abijah to Quamin, and creeping up behind the child, he pinched the parcel. A dismal wail issued from it and the boy jumped back in astonishment, then broke into wild laughter.

"Oh! my Fader, Quamin, she got de puss meck up into parcel."

Quamin joined the laughter and ventured to express some fears for the cat's safety, to which the little girl replied,

"Chut! how him can stifle w'en I cut hole in de paper jus' close to him nose?"

"Him dead already," kin y suggested Abijah.

"If him dead how him could bawl—eh? Tell me dat now, Missa Wiseman."

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## The Story of Quamin

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The word to embark came to put an end to further discussion, and Fibba mounted into the cart still clinging to her treasure, which was becoming restless and soon had broken away out of its paper prison.

"W'at you doin' wid de puss, pick'ney?" asked her father as the cat's head came to view.

"I teckin' her wid me, puppa, because she goin' to die if I lef' her alone in de house."

"T'row away dat puss dis minit," commanded Rose-Mary. "You t'ink say Nana Dreckett will t'enk you to bring such-like inseck' to her house? T'row it away, I tell you," she repeated, as Fibba seemed inclined to disobey.

The little girl began sobbing but clung to her treasure.

"Give it to me here," said the woman, losing patience.

"I will t'row it away for you, Cousin," volunteered Quamin who sat next the little girl. "Give me de puss, Fibba."

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## The Passing of Father Dreckett

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He snatched the cat from her arms and the little girl screamed as she thought she heard a thud in the wayside bushes.

"Me poor little puss goin' starve to deat'," she wailed, until a dig from Quamin's elbow made her stop inquiringly.

"Hush! you hear. Noan cry for I got you' puss inside me jacket."

"T'enk God!" sighed Fibba. "Meck me feel him."

"See here," said Quamin taking hold of her outstretched hand and guiding it into the recesses of his jacket.

Thus reassured, the child, weary with excitement and late hours, fell asleep in the bottom of the cart, and soon her example was followed by the entire party who slept undisturbed by the noisy cracking of the driver's whip or the jolting of the springless cart in and out of ruts.

It was just daylight when it came to a standstill before the door of a small store in the Bay where, still in a semi-somnolent condition,



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## The Story of Quamin

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they dismounted and followed Rose-Mary into the shop which was owned by one of her many cousins.

Here they were made welcome and refreshed, partly from their own store and partly from the cousin's; after which fortune favoured them once more with another empty cart which took them to within a mile of Nana's cottage.

Quamin was all excitement for it was a year since he had been home, and there was an added thrill in the thought of the dead body lying there. He had never learned to love his grandfather, feeling intuitively that he was looked upon as an encumbrance by the old man, still Father Dreckett was one of his earliest memories, and had never been actively hostile, and now death had wiped out all remembrance of any fancied injuries which Quamin had at one time entertained.

Another passage of arms between Rose-Mary and Fibba had taken place when the former found how she had been tricked; but

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## The Passing of Father Dreckett

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Quamin, who by his quickness and willing ways had won her approbation, begged to be allowed to take the animal as a present to his grandmother, assuring Rose-Mary that the old woman would greatly prize the gift.

He was the first to reach the house bearing in his arms the poor little bone of contention and closely followed by Fibba and Abijah.

When her grandson appeared on the threshold, Nana Dreckett rose to meet him. Throwing her arms around his neck, she began anew her violent lamentations and soon the whole assembly were bearing her company, creating a scene not unlike that of the lost souls in Hades pictured by Goethe in his *Faust*.

The children followed the lead of their elders, and the cat, terrified by the uproar, added her quantum to it, being with difficulty restrained by Quamin from vanishing through the open door.

## XI

### The Funeral

**I**N the middle of the floor, the coffin rested on two chairs and in it lay the old man in such lifelike semblance that his grandson started back a step.

The corpse was dressed in the suit which Father Dreckett had worn to his grandson's christening, the pockets having been carefully sewn up that the departed spirit might get no money to return to earth. The black beaver hat was on his head and his claw-like old hands, encased in white cotton gloves several sizes too large, were folded on his breast and on his feet were a pair of patent leather pumps.

"Him mus' go before him Maker in him very best," said Nana as she gave orders to the carpenter to allow a little on the length

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## The Story of Quamin

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of the coffin to make room for the historic hat.

The arrival of Parson Blackgrove was the signal for the company to file out of the house and leave Nana and her nearest relatives alone with the corpse.

"Quamin," said his grandmother, "take you' leave of you' gran'fader."

The boy stepped reluctantly to the coffin and looking the dead man in the face with eyes wide with terror said, in a scarcely audible whisper, "Good-bye, Grandfader; you can no more be my gran'fader—have not'ing more to do wid me." Then he turned and fled through the door.

Each one of the connections went through the same formula, varying the words only, to suit their degree of relationship and when all had gone through this ceremony Constantine screwed the lid on to the coffin and arranged two folded sheets to form a sling and serve instead of handles to the pall-bearers.

The procession formed with Parson Black-

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## The Funeral

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grove leading, and Nana and Quamin following just behind the coffin.

The grave had been dug at the foot of a large mango tree which stood on a slight rising not far from the house and to this the procession wended its way, but before it had proceeded many yards there was a halt, and Samuel, the pennkeeper, who with a relative of the deceased named Barabas constituted two of the pall-bearers turned to the widow and said,

"Him won't go, Nana."

The widow looked puzzled. They were passing no house harbouring an inmate against whom the old man in life might have had a grudge, and she was therefore at a loss to understand his reason for stopping the procession.

"W'at is de matter?" demanded the advance guard discovering the break.

"Carpse won't go no further, Parson," replied Constantine, who with Cousin Joshy were the other two pall-bearers.

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## The Story of Quamin

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There was a pause, then the company began whispering together and Cousin 'Lizbet' stepped up to Nana and whispered something in her ear. Nana nodded assent and going to the coffin appeared to hold converse with the dead, then turning to the pall-bearers she said,

"You can go on now. Him did just want to make me remember to lef' de bottle of rum for him to-night. You 'member I promise him dat las' night at de wake?"

"Ah! so for true," said Samuel, as though he had quite forgotten the incident.

The procession started and this time the corpse was carried without hindrance to the side of the grave where, in lowering the slings from their shoulders, the pall-bearers showed some awkwardness, letting the coffin turn a little to one side.

Nana threw up her hands exclaiming:

"Oh! my Fader, look at dat now, and if there is one t'ing de ole man did more

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## The Funeral

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potickler 'bout, it was to have him hat straight 'pon him head."

"Never min', me chile," said Parson Blackgrove soothingly. "Seeing as it was not his fault, de Lard will surely excuse him for dat. Let us pray."

The burial service was read, the coffin lowered to its last resting place, and the company joining hands in a circle about the grave, sang "Only one more river to cross," after which the coffin was covered, the earth beaten down, and with another Sankey and Moody hymn to finish with, they dispersed, the relatives of the widow returning with her to the house.

Here it was Rose-Mary's intention to remain for at least ten days, as the ghost of the departed was apt to prowls about the place which had once known him for nine nights after death, and of course Nana could not be left to face the "duppy" alone.

That night in the bedroom of the little cottage where Father Dreckett had been laid

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## The Story of Quamin

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out a lamp was left burning; and true to her promise, Nana purchased a pint of rum which she placed with a plate of cooked food on the table, whereon stood the lamp. Then she shut the door and the entire household betook themselves to sleep upon the floor of the sitting-room.

Just before midnight, Nana was disturbed by the wild cackling of a hen which she had put to set upon a nest of eggs under the house.

"Rose-Mary, Rose-Mary," she called in low, frightened tones, "him come!" but Rose-Mary heard not and knew nothing of the visit from the dead until next morning revealed the rum bottle empty, and most of the food consumed.

"Lard! Him did hungry for true," she said, and every one agreed with her.

Meanwhile Samuel, with his head bound up in a wet cloth, lay on his straw litter unable to move, while Barabas, whose share in the spoil had been limited, staggered about



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## The Funeral

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vainly trying to perform the office of penn-keeper, until dismissed by Constantine as "A good for not'ing jackass."

When three days had passed and Samuel's indisposition grew worse instead of better a story got abroad, probably through the instrumentality of Barabas, who like Adam felt himself exempt from blame in as much as he had not been the one to pluck the fruit, that the pennkeeper was haunted by a duppy.

Samuel, hearing this, and remembering his theft, grew so alarmed that his condition became critical. Something must be done, and as a duly registered medical man was of no avail in such a case, the services of a "Duppy Catcher" must be sought.

"Guinea Bill is first rate for dat," volunteered Harry, and a messenger was dispatched for the obeahman and soon he came, riding the mule, while the messenger walked behind at a respectful distance.

Guinea Bill carried a much worn carpet bag, and dismounting demanded:

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## The Story of Quamin

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"Where is de sick?"

Constantine conducted him to Samuel's bedside and he stooped to examine the patient, lifting the eyelids and peering under them, staring into the face of the prostrate man, whose teeth chattered with combined ague and fright.

When he had finished his examination, Guinea Bill ordered Constantine to leave him alone with the patient, and when he had been obeyed, he said to Samuel:

"You hab any quarrel wid anybody? Tell de truth now or you will surely die."

"No, sah," faltered Samuel.

"You t'ief anyt'ing from you neighbours? Tell de truth now or you will surely die."

Samuel opened his lips as if to speak, then closed them again.

"Tell de truth, sinner, or you shall widder away like de 'Dead and Wake' [sensitive plant] when you touch it."

"I t'ief a pint of rum, Guinea," faltered Samuel.

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## The Funeral

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"Aha! I said so, my son; and who did dat rum belong to—de dead or de living?"

"De dead," came in a whisper from the pennkeeper's ashen lips.

"Aha! just so I thought, for I see the picture of dat carpse in you' eyeball and de case is a bad one. Dat dead was very fond of rum, and you did not wisely to rob him; derefore, before I can catch dat duppy you must pay de price in silver, my son, twelve pieces of silver. An' furdernore, you mus' place upon de grave of dat said carpse a bottle of rum two times de size of de one dat you t'ief from him."

Samuel, knowing what to expect, had tied his small savings in the corner of a handkerchief which he had hidden under the mattress. This he now drew forth.

"Eleven is all I has, Guinea, but de res' I will pay you when I get better."

"Wid less dan twelve pieces in my pocket it is double de work to catch dat duppy, an'

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## The Story of Quamin

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you mus' derefore pay me six pieces more when you got de money."

Samuel groaned; this was indeed extortion, yet he had no choice, for refusal meant death.

"Very well, Guinea, I 'gree to dat."

From the bag the magician now drew a pint bottle into which he put twelve corn grains, and leaving the bag in a corner of the sick man's room went out to commence operations.

There was an anxious assemblage waiting for further developments and this now drew back as the obeahman appeared.

Three times he made the rounds of the house, rattling the corn grains and calling, "Chick, Chick, Chick!" As he completed the third round he made a thrust into the air with the bottle and exclaiming, "Aha! I got you," quickly corked in the offending astral.

Now that the danger was over, the tongues of the onlookers relaxed and every one wanted a peep at the precious bottle.

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## The Funeral

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"I see him! I see him!" shouted Barabas, "an' him look jus' like Fader Dreckett."

Hearing this, the anxiety of the crowd to examine the bottle became greater than ever, but Guinea Bill quickly put a damper on their curiosity by wrapping it in a dirty red handkerchief and returning with it to Samuel's room.

"Now, my son, you is safe, but doan forget de six shillings for him is a strong duppy an' if you doan pay de full price dat cork can never keep him in and dat duppy will come out and haunt you worse dan ever."

"God bless you, Guinea Bill!" murmured the sick man, who as soon as the magician had left him fell into a refreshing sleep.

Guinea Bill retired to the house of Constantine where he was liberally entertained, and in a few days Samuel was sufficiently well to attend to his duties.

His illness and subsequent recovery were the talk of the entire neighbourhood and fear of Father Dreckett's duppy kept most folks

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## The Story of Quamin

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indoors after dark. At sunset little groups collected at the various houses where ghost stories from one and the other added to the general nervousness, and when the time came to disperse, the company saw each other home accompanied by a lantern bearer and a dog. Every shadow on the way caused a halt and many a sudden scream from one or the other of the women broke the stillness of the tropical night.

## XII

### The Pill Box

**A**T last the nine days and nights had passed and the little community could settle down once more with a sense of security, since they felt sure that even if Father Dreckett should revisit the earth, he would not wander far from the shades of the mango tree, beneath which rested his mortal remains; so that the dog and the lantern had had their day, and retired into the background until another death should call again for their services.

On the tenth day after the funeral, Cousin Joshy and his family went home, leaving Quamin behind at the request of his grandmother, who felt in need of his consoling presence.

Poor little Fibba shed many bitter tears at

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## The Story of Quamin

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the parting with Quasheba, for between the little girls a strong friendship had sprung up, and Negril seemed a very dull prospect indeed beside the many and varied attractions of life in the mountains, with Quasheba to lead and she to follow, the part Fibba ever liked the best.

Her cat, too, must be parted from for a while, for after many consultations it had been agreed that Quamin should take charge of Miss Elsie on the return journey, for there was no certainty as to what Rose-Mary's opinion on the subject of its return might be.

Quamin promised to take every care of her pet, and Fibba had learned to have confidence in his promises, so she bade farewell for a time to the cat, showering many kisses on its cold nose, then putting it into Quasheba's arms, bent forward to kiss her friend.

"Wipe you' mout' firs'," commanded Quasheba, drawing back. "I doan want to ketch tyzick, an' is only yesterday I see Miss Elsie eatin' a lizard."



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## The Pill Box

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Fibba obeyed, and the elders having by this time got through their adieux, the little party of barefoot travellers started on their long tramp.

Quamin and Quasheba, now left without companions of their respective sexes, fell back into their old habits, and started for the pond with a dilapidated basket to catch ticky-tickies (minnows). At the pond side Quamin stooped to pick from the mud a large red pill box with a white cover.

"See here, Quasheba," he said, showing it to the little girl, "dis is jus' de same as de one Samuel fin' at de back of de stable door in de Bay w'en Rowlin' Calf bite me."

"Dat is one of Guinea Bill pill box," returned the little girl. "I know dem well for one day I see Harry have some, an' I ask him w'ere him get dem. Harry larnin' obeah, you know," she added in a sepulchral whisper; then as if a sudden thought had struck her, she added, "I wonder if him can turn into Rowlin' Calf w'en him like?"

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## The Story of Quamin

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"Nebber. I doan believe so; but see him comin' dere; meck we ask him."

"Hide de pill box," said Quasheba hurriedly, and Quamin thrust it into his pocket.

"W'at you two doin' here?" asked Harry as he came up to them.

"Catchin' fish," replied Quasheba promptly. "Harry," she continued, "you know if somebody can turn into Rowlin' Calf shape?"

"Of course dem can—if dem only know de way."

"You know?" asked the girl innocently.

"Yes, an' I can say de word an' turn you into a chicken or a lizard."

"Lard!" exclaimed Quasheba, seriously alarmed.

"Oh! chut, doan believe him, Quasheba, him can't do it at all, at all, but jus' boasin' w'en him say dat."

"Better teck care, Missa Quamin, or I call deppy now come teck you."

"Call den. You is a liard from time, Harry,

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## The Pill Box

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an' doan know not'ing 'bout call duppy or suchlike t'ing."

The answer was a stinging blow on the side of his head, and immediately Quamin was on the defensive.

The two boys fought wildly after the manner of their African forefathers, while Quasheba jumped around them, encouraging Quamin and clapping her hands in unrestrained excitement every time he gained an advantage. At last Quamin's chance came and lowering his head he butted with all his might; the blow landed square in the other boy's diaphragm and sent him sprawling breathless to the ground.

"Teck dat for you imperance," said the victor triumphantly as he threw himself on the grass beside Quasheba.

Harry soon recovered and sitting up looked about for his hat.

"See it here," said Quamin with a laugh as he threw the pill box at his antagonist, and Harry, looking up quickly, received it full in his face.

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## The Story of Quamin

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"W'ere you get dat?" queried the youthful Duppy Catchner, in surprise, and Quasheba answered before Quamin had time to do so:

"Behin' de stable in de Bay dat time you form Rowlin' Calf an' juke Quamin wid penknife."

The boy was dumb with amazement, and plainly agitated, but he quickly recovered himself and with a forced laugh said:

"You t'ink you know everyt'ing Miss Quasheba. How I could be at de Bay an' at me moder house at de same time?"

"You nebber go to you' moder house, for Barabas tell me him see you drivin' in a cart to de Bay dat same day, an' you' moder live up at de mountainside."

Harry was nonplussed but determined not to give in.

"Barabas tell you a lie; I only drive as far as de shop to get somet'ing to carry give me moder how she been sick."

"W'en him see you, you pass de shop long time," said Quasheba determinedly.

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## The Pill Box

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"Oh! stop you nonsense, you damn little fool," said Harry fiercely, losing his temper and rushing at the little girl who quickly got behind Quamin.

"You want to fight with woman, eh?" asked this latter squaring himself and rolling his fists right in Harry's face. "Well take dat an' go 'bout you' business."

He delivered a blow which sent Harry reeling back and would have followed it up with another but his antagonist, at no time very brave, took to his heels, only stopping at a safe distance to shake his fist at Quamin and say,

"I will pay you for dis, you hear?"

When he had disappeared the two children settled down quietly to the catching of their fish, and after an hour or so had enough of the small minnows to make quite a meal. These they divided and carried to their respective homes where they were eaten with much relish.

More than half his time Quamin spent with.

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## The Story of Quamin

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his godfather and had many a heavenly gallop on the mare Bees Wing, who seemed not to have forgotten him, and whinnied at the sound of his voice.

Thus the days flew by, and it was very regretfully that he woke one morning to the knowledge that this was his last day at home. Nana, too, was sad at the thought of parting once more from her darling, but she still cherished fondly the dream of seeing him a mighty preacher, and so smothered her regrets and went to work to cook him corn pones, duckanoes, and other tropical delicacies that he might feast royally before he went.

As for Quasheba, she was utterly cast down, for with the departure of Quamin she would be bereft of all companions, with the exception of Harry, who, of course was now out of the question. She hovered around Quamin all day, and only turned her footsteps homewards at sunset because she did not care to merit the punishment which would surely be hers if she stayed away longer.

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## The Pill Box

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"I will go wid you as far as de house," Quamin announced, "for I doan say day-day to Rachel yet."

Early in the morning his grandmother wakened him and hurrying into his clothes he made haste to catch Miss Elsie and secure her in a basket which he had prepared for the purpose.

Hardly had he swallowed his cup of hot beverage, and a piece of bread, which Nana set before him, when Constantine's cart came to the door.

He got in and the old woman saw to the stowing away of his bundle, then kissed his dusky cheek, whispering, "May God bless you, me boy!" and with eyes heavy with tears, watched him go from her once more.

The cart crept away in the dim, shadowy light of early morning and when it had vanished from her sight, the old woman turned back into her cottage, feeling that now indeed was she widowed.

## XIII

### Negril Again

AS Quamin walked up the slope to the cottage at Negril, Abijah and Fibba came running to meet him.

"W'ere me puss?" asked the little girl before she had reached his side.

"Sce you' puss dere," he exclaimed, throwing the basket containing her treasure to Fibba, who with difficulty caught it before it fell to the ground. "An' min' you, dat is a job I doan want again. Dat puss 'pon bawlin' from de minit de cart move off till now."

"She is on dyin' wid hungry!" exclaimed Fibba and started to run for the house, where the cat was speedily set at liberty and fed on the scraps which her mistress had saved from her own scanty meal.



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## Negril Again

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The two boys followed more slowly, Abijah entertaining Quamin with an account of the doings at Negril during his absence.

"Me fader meckin' a new canoe, you know, Quamin, a able big one, can hol' six somebody at one time."

"W'ere him have it?" asked Quamin full of interest.

"Down by de sea-shore, as you go to Daddy Longfoot shop. I will show you it as soon as you eat you dinner done; dem goin' burn it out to-marra."

But Quamin was too tired after his long journey in the hot sun, and had no sooner eaten his portion of salt fish and cocoa than he betook himself to his mattress and slept the round of the clock.

Next morning after a visit had been paid to the new canoe, the boys bethought them of a long postponed swimming contest, and started for the beach.

Fibba, who was feeding the chickens at the kitchen door, threw down the remaining

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## The Story of Quamin

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food in her apron, and ran after them, asking:

"W'ere you goin', Abijah? Goin' bade?"

Getting no answer, she ran after them to the beach where the boys were hurriedly stripping off their clothes.

"Go 'way! Go 'way!" they shouted in unison. "Gal doan have no business here."

Fibba's eyes filled with tears; she had so often shared their sports and could swim almost as well as they could, so why should they object to her company?

"All right, yah! I not comin' near you; I goin' bade by meself," she returned with a toss of her head though her tears were falling fast.

"Teck care shark ketch you," called Abijah, and then the boys plunged into the water.

When she had rounded a point in the bay, and was hidden from their sight, the girl undressed slowly and walked naked into the sea. All her joy had faded and though the

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## Negril Again

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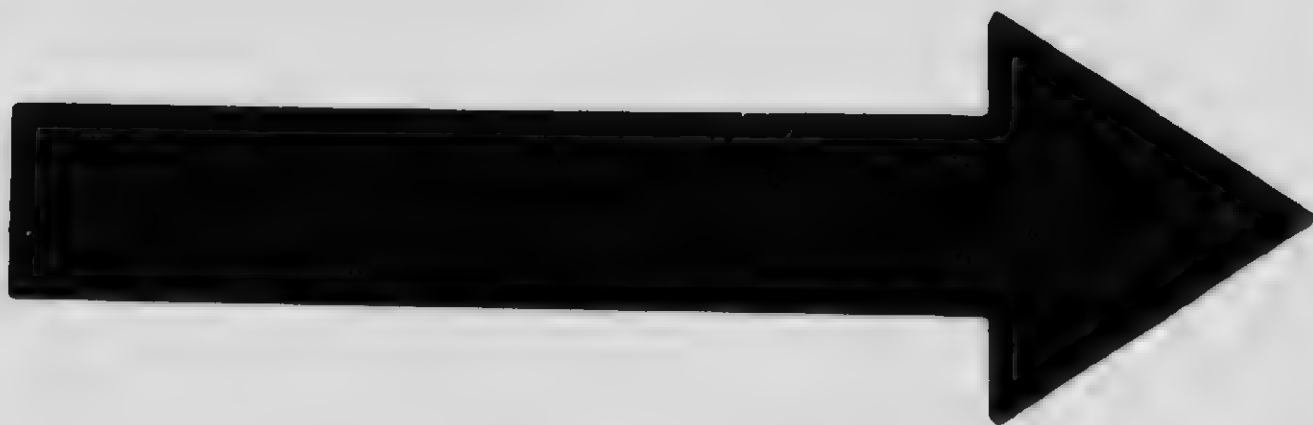
sun shone brightly and the day was hot, she shivered as the water rose to her knees.

Dipping her head down, she wet her forehead, then plunging boldly in, swam around like a big brown fish.

From the point she could see the boys without being seen and watched them swim out a good distance, then turn and race back. This they repeated again and again, and sometimes Quamin was first and sometimes Abijah, until Fibba could not be sure who was really the victor.

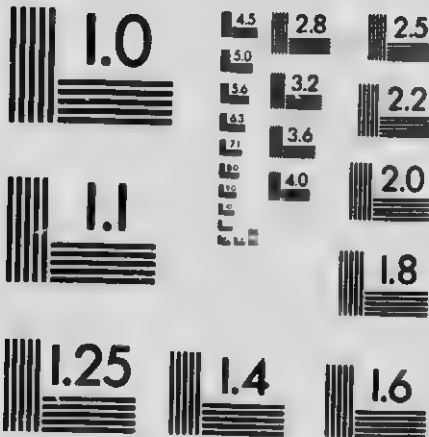
After a few dives, they came to the beach and got into their clothes, and Fibba, having seen it all, continued her own aquatic gymnastics. She swam out as far as she judged the boys had gone; back and forth until she was tired, then turned to come in. Just then Quamin and Abijah, who were coming towards her, saw the little black head disappear beneath the waves.

"Run, Abijah!" said Quamin, and the two



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## The Story of Quamin

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ran to the beach, but there was no sign of the little girl.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "shark got her. Meck has', Abijah, an' get you' fader."

Abijah did as he was bid and soon Joshy came running.

"She come up yet?" asked the man, of Quamin.

"No, sah," the boy replied, his teeth chattering.

"Get de canoe," he commanded, and soon his fishing dug-out was dancing on the waves.

By this time a crowd had gathered, the schoolmaster in its midst.

"Let me go wid you, Joshy?" he said, and Joshy nodded.

They paddled out to the spot indicated by the boys, then without a word the father handed his paddle to his companion and plunged into the waves.

So long did Joshy remain lost to sight that those on shore feared a double tragedy

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## Negril Again

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and began to discuss what should be done next. Before any decision had been reached, however, his head appeared above the water and a second later he had lifted to the side of the canoe the little brown corpse of his daughter.

The schoolmaster uttered a cry of horror, but the father only said, "Paddle to de shore," and sat holding the dead girl upon his knees.

There were many willing hands to beach the canoe and some would have helped the bereaved man with his burden, but he waved them off and carried the corpse up the hill to the house where Rose-Mary sat wailing, amid a circle of comforters.

Next day a grave was dug in a cocoanut grove close by the road and with a brief funeral service read by the schoolmaster, Fibba was laid to rest; it was her turn to lead now and the others must follow when their time had come.

While the corpse remained in the house,

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## The Story of Quamin

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Miss Elsie, mewling piteously, had desired to creep to her old shelter in the little girl's arms but this was not allowed, and the cat retired to a dark corner where she lay unobserved until the funeral procession formed, then she crept softly after the group and remained behind unnoticed when the last of the mourners had gone from the grave.

That night it rained heavily and a boy returning from the light-house, overwhelmed with fear at the thought of passing the newly made grave, as he neared the spot picked up a stone, and when the tired mewling of the little cat reached his ears, he threw it in the direction of the sound and fled for dear life.

There was a mew cut short, then silence from all but the pattering rain drops, some of which fell on the body of the little dead cat as she lay full length on the grave of her mistress.

It was about two weeks after this that Quasheba received the long promised letter



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## Negril Again

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from Quamin. She found it at the shop where it had been left by some stray traveller from Negril, and where she had gone to make a purchase for her mother. Her face beamed delight as the envelope bearing the inscription, "Miss Ruth Deborah Evans" was handed to her, and despatching her mother's business as quickly as possible, turned to go home.

Now Ruth Deborah Evans had learned of the schoolmaster despised of Nana Dreckett how to read out of a book, but the perusal of writing offered some difficulties, and the little girl, after weighty consideration, decided to take her letter to Cousin 'Lizbet' who was her grandmother and something of a scholar.

The road home seemed unusually long as she hurried over it, but there was consolation in examining from time to time the address written in large childish characters.

Cousin 'Lizbet' sat on a bench outside the door and Quasheba lost no time in depositing her mother's parcel on the kitchen

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## The Story of Quamin

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table and presenting the letter to the old woman with the request to have it read.

Cousin 'Lizbet' drew the spectacles from her forehead where they had been reposing. and settled them on her nose, then with great deliberation opened the letter and proceeded to read it aloud. It ran thus:

"DEAR QUASHEBA,

"I larn nough to keip de pramise I mayke to you an wishin to tell you dat you fren Fibba is died of drownding. We does our bes to save her but cudden quarlify. She bury onder one big cocoanut tree an her puss is also pas before wid her. Miss Elsie ly ded on de grave an dere is some wat say dat de duppy choke de cat dat she mite have it wid her how she so much lov it in life.

"Respeckful you fren,

"DANIEL BELTESHAZZAR FIELDING."

The tears were streaming down Quasheba's face for in her own wayward, warm-hearted way she really loved her friend.

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## Negril Again

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"Fibba dead an' gone! Fibba dead an' gone!" she moaned, rolling around on the ground where she had thrown herself.

"Chile, stop you' bawlin'," said her grandmother. "Fibba is now wid de Lard w're dere is no more weepin', only singin' an' rejoicin'."

There was silence for a while, then Quasheba lifted up her tear-stained face and said:

"But Grannie, Fibba carn sing no more dan John Crow, so how she goin' to manage?"

"De Lard will provide, chile, an' dem as has no vice, him will meck to play 'pon cymbal. Come now, meck we go tell Nana Dreckett."

"W'at cymbal stan' like, Grannie?" asked Quasheba, ever athirst for information.

"Jus' like two pot-head meck out of brass, an' dem beat dem togedder so, bram! bram!"

There was silence between the two all the rest of the way to Nana Dreckett's house, broken only by an occasional snuffle from the little girl, who could not find complete comfort in the contemplation of her friend's bliss.

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## The Story of Quamin

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That night after they had returned from their visit, Rachel, hearing an extraordinary noise in the kitchen, went to see what it was and found Quasheba marching back and forth, singing her favourite hymn, "Only one more river," to an accompaniment of clashing pot-lids.

"For gracious sake! W'at is de matter wid de chile?" asked Rachel astonished and Quasheba replied shyly:

"I larnin' meself to play de cymbal, Ma, so dat w'en I dead de Lard will give me a seat 'pon de same bench wid Fibba."

"Chile, you too fool! go to you' bed an' say you' prayers good, so dat Massa up a' top will excuse you dis time."

Quasheba, putting away her cymbals, did as she was bid and soon went to sleep to dream that she had died and was up in Heaven with Fibba, with whom she was playing a duet on golden pot-lids, much to the approbation of the archangel Gabriel, her grandmother's favourite among the heavenly host.

## XIV

### Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

WHEN Quamin had reached the age limit for the public schools and was, if anything, rather more learned than most negro boys of his age, Nana Dreckett's ambition was not yet satisfied, and she gladly accepted the schoolmaster's offer to keep her grandson for awhile as a private scholar.

Cousin Joshy was pleased at the arrangement for Quamin had become quite a valuable assistant in the fishing business, and as his lessons must now be taken in the evening after school hours, there would be more time at his disposal than before. So all hands were satisfied, and no one realised that Nana Dreckett had once more made heroic sacrifice of her own feelings for the good of her grandson.

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## The Story of Quamin

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She felt old age descending heavily upon her and wearied for some sign of the "call" coming to Quamin, for as yet there had been none, but still she clung to her faith in Cousin 'Lizbet's prophecy, and waited patiently. However, as the years continued to pass and still there was no sign, the old woman, feeling something must be wrong, sent for her grandson to come home and she would get her friend Parson Blackgrove to decide for her the proper direction in which to set the feet of Daniel Belteshazzar.

Quamin felt the parting from the household at Negril where he had made a comfortable niche for himself, and it would have been hard to recognise in the tall, well set up youth, wearing a suit of blue serge, well blackened boots, and a jaunty sailor hat, the little barefoot boy who had clung to his grandmother's skirts six years ago.

Abijah, also well grown and much changed, went with Quamin as far as the Bay where the shop cart took them and where the boys

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## Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

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parted with much regret, promising to see each other soon again.

The rest of the way Quamin must walk, so after breakfasting with Rose-Mary's cousin, he put his supple jack through the ties of his bundle and, swinging it over his shoulder, set out.

When the outskirts of the town were passed, he stopped, and sitting on a wayside bank, removed his shiny boots and yellow socks; then tying the boots together, slung them also on a stick over his shoulder, stuffed the socks into his pocket, and proceeded on his way with much more comfort.

It was late in the evening when he reached his grandmother's cottage where Quasheba, a slender girl of fifteen, was busy helping Nana Dreckett in preparing a sumptuous repast and watching the road by which Quamin must arrive.

They were both in the kitchen getting the duckanoes out of the pot when a voice said, "Hi! Grannie, how you do?"

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## The Story of Quamin

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The duckanoes fell with a splash back into the pot and Nana Dreckett gathered the boy into her longing arms, while Quasheba stood by beaming with joy.

"My fader! Quasheba, you grow into big woman already," said the boy when he had time to look at her. "How you do?"

"So-so, t'ank you, an' how is you'self?"

"Mos' tired to deat' an' hungry too."

"Poor boy! Quasheba help me wid dese t'ings an' meck we give him some victuals," said the old woman turning once more to the steaming pot.

It did n't take long to get the duckanoes out upon a dish and carry them to the house where Quamin followed and was soon feasting royally while Quasheba and his grandmother, with joyous excitement, waited on him.

The girl had somehow expected to see the barefoot Quamin of her childhood's days, and this fine young man, as he seemed to her in his fashionable clothes (for the boots had been replaced before the end of the



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## Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

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journey), brought to her a strange shyness which she had never before experienced.

When Quamin's hunger had been appeased, the three sat on the door-step on which Father Dreckett had died, and the old woman and the girl listened with eager attention to all that Quamin had to tell of the events of the last four years, for it was all that time since he had been home.

Quamin was a good raconteur and gave to the placid every-day life at Negril touches which made it alive with interest for his listeners. So enthralled was Quasheba that she had forgotten the long walk home, and it was now so late that Nana Dreckett persuaded her to stay until the morning. She was easily persuaded and shared Nana's bed with much complacency.

The next morning Quamin must go to see his godfather and Nana took the opportunity of holding council with Parson Blackgrove.

Now Constantine was one of the parson's most influential parishioners, and had plainly

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## The Story of Quamin

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expressed disapproval of his sister's choice and of coercion being put upon the boy who was evidently not destined by nature for the ministry. Clearly then, the parson's duty was to disabuse Nana Dreckett's mind of the cherished idea, and this he tried to do by proving the boy's inefficiency.

"Has he heard de voice of de Lard in de night time, ma'm?" he asked.

"No, Parson, I never hear so," she replied dolefully.

"Does him break out into singin' an' thanksgivin', ma'm?"

Nana shook her head; her heart was growing heavier with each question she was obliged to answer in the negative.

"Has he openly renounce' de worl', de flesh, an' de debbil, an' does he sit apart w'en oders are feastin' an' eat little?"

Nana groaned in spirit at the remembrance of Quamin's raid upon last night's duckanoes which this question called up.

"No, Broder, de boy got a good twis'

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## Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

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[appetite], an' las' night he eat off ten duckanoe."

The parson threw up his hands in pious horror.

"Ten, did you say, Nana?"

"Yes, ten of dem, besides fish an' cocoa."

"Dere is no hope, Nana, no hope, for one dat is gluttonous cannot become a preacher. He mus' firs' desire to live like de prophet in de wilderness, takin' only w'at de Lard sen' him by de ravens. Mrs. Dreckett, strive no longer wid de boy but let him larn a trade; dat is de bes' t'ing you can do, else might you' gran'son become like unto de false prophets who prophesy foolishness."

As the old woman listened to this verdict, her heart rose up in rebellion and her mind classed the parson with the false prophets of which he had just spoken. After a few moments of silence she said:

"Will you have some of de duckanoe I meck for Quamin, Parson Blackgrove, before you go?"

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## The Story of Quamin

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"T'ank you kindly, ma'm," he replied with alacrity. "I could eat some wid pleasure."

"Den go somew'eres else w're dere is raven to feed you. I doan has none in dis house."

Saying which, Nana, with flashing eyes, rose and seizing the chair on which the parson sat, upset its occupant on to the floor.

Too much amazed to protest, he hastily picked himself up and walked away to the tree on which his mule was tethered.

Without even a look in Nana Dreckett's direction, he mounted and rode away and the old woman, left alone, sat down to think the matter over. Having discovered Parson Blackgrove's duplicity, her admiration turned to hatred and she was now almost glad that Quamin had none of the qualifications for a preacher.

"Dem is all w'ited sepulchre dat goeth about seekin' who dey can devour, an' I may as well put de boy to a good trade at once an' done wid it," muttered the old

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## Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

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woman to herself, and Quamin on his return was electrified with the news of her changed intentions.

"But Grannie, I doan want no trade. Meck me go back to work for Godpa; him want me an' I can do dat work widouten larnin'."

But Nana steeled her heart, remembering the sad outcome of Quamin's pennkeeping on a former occasion.

"No, me boy, you not goin' to get into any more trouble t'rough horse ridin' like las' time; I will teck care of dat."

Fortunately Quamin was young and there was no hurry, so the boy could stay with her for the present and help with the ground and other matters of a similar nature. This would give her time to decide on a suitable trade and find a teacher for him. This arrangement suited the boy who found a considerable amount of time to spend with Constantine on the penn where he was often called upon to fill temporarily the place

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## The Story of Quamin

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of some one of the penn hands, absent through illness, fancied or real.

On these occasions Quamin indulged to the full his love of riding which had grown and intensified, having been unattainable at Negril.

Quasheba would have liked to follow her old playmate around as of yore, but already the serious duties of life had descended upon her, for Rachel had developed an incurable disease which well-nigh disabled her, and Cousin 'Lizbet' was too old to do much work.

Quasheba had to bring provisions from the ground, cook the scanty meals, and feed the pigs as well as wash for the family. This latter duty was, in truth, not heavy as these women of the tropics wore but little clothing; still, for a child of fifteen the life was a fairly busy one and she would find time only in the evening to run over to Nana Dreckett's for a chat with Quamin, unless he came to see her, which happened quite frequently.

On one of these occasions the talk turned

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## Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

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upon Harry whose mother and father had both died and who had immediately left for the Bay in search of the long wished for trade, and beyond the fact that he had become apprenticed to a tailor, nothing had been heard of him since.

"But one gal tell me dat she hear he is comin' up dis way soon, so perhaps you will see de Rowlin' Calf agen, Quamin," said Quasheba.

"So you doan forget 'bout dat yet, eh? Dat was true Rowlin' Calf, Quasheba, an' not Harry at all."

"How you know?" queried the little girl brusquely.

"I doan know how I know, but I know; dat's all," replied the boy a trifle offended, but Quasheba only sucked her teeth and tossed her head. She was not to be so easily convinced.

"Den how *you* know, Miss Wiseman?" he asked in return.

"I doan know how I know, but I know!"

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## The Story of Quamin

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mockingly replied she, and Quamin, quite offended now, walked off in the direction of home without even a good-night word.

One evening some months later, as Quasheba stood upon the railing of the pig-pen to pour the contents of a tin bucket which she carried into the trough, a familiar voice accosted her.

"Good-evenin', Quasheba."

She turned with a start to see Harry standing a few feet away, dressed even better than Quamin had been on his return from Negril and smiling cynically.

"W'ere you come from?" demanded the girl shortly.

"Come from the Bay, of course, an' jus' on purpose to see you, me dear."

"I doan you dear an' I won't meck you call me dat, Missa Rowlin' Calf."

Harry's face grew dark with anger, but he controlled himself and laughed a short forced laugh.

"So you doan get over dat nonsense yet!



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## Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

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Well, I suppose you can't help bein' ignorant how you live all de time on dis hill top."

Any other time Quasheba would have thrown a piece of the pig's food into his face in answer, but something in his superiority of dress and manner overwhelmed her and she contented herself with turning her back upon him and bestowing all her attention upon the grunting pigs who were impatiently waiting to sample the contents of the bucket.

Harry continued his way to Nana Dreckett's cottage where he found Quamin just returning from the ground with a heavy basket of provisions on his head.

The boy from the town smiled pityingly as he looked at the load and shook hands with Quamin who, quite unabashed, greeted him joyously. A chat with Harry would seem like old times and be refreshing to the boy who had long since forgotten their quarrel of some years ago.

Harry stayed all night with Quamin and they discussed all the subjects which had

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## The Story of Quamin

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been of mutual interest when they worked together, while Harry had an interesting store of information concerning town life which proved most alluring to the country bred boy.

"An' w'at you goin' to do now, Quamin?" asked the apprentice.

"I doan know yet. Grannie want me to larn trade but carn' meck up her min' which one she like de bes'."

"You ought to come to de Bay wid me w'en I goin' back an' try de tailorin'; I like it well an' you get good money for you work. Missa Fernandez say he want anoder boy to work for him, an' maybe he would teck you if you come wid me."

"Dat would be firs' rate!" cried Quamin all fired with his companion's glowing description of the life of a tailor's apprentice. "If Grannie will meck me go, I will go," he continued. "I goin' ask her right off."

Nana Dreckett received this new idea rather favourably but would not give her

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## Nana Gives up Hope and the Parson

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final decision until Constantine had been consulted. This was soon managed and the godfather saw no objection to his child of promise giving this trade a trial, though, truth to tell, he rejoiced in the moral certainty that the boy's apprenticeship to a work so sedentary would be but brief.

Once again there was preparation for Quamin's departure, and this time his wardrobe, a trifle more extensive, was encased in a leather bag in place of the red cotton handkerchief which had done duty when he travelled to school at Negril.

The little community, hearing of the arrangement, thought Quamin extremely lucky, all except Quasheba, who was astonished and mortified. She argued long with Quamin in the vain endeavour to turn him from this project, hurling every insulting epithet she could think of at the trade of tailoring; but he only laughed and told her she was a foolish girl and it was a sin to hate anybody as she hated Harry.

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## The Story of Quamin

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The boys left at dawn one morning and Quasheba was not among those who assembled the night before to bid them good-bye.

## XV

### The Bay

**T**HE sun was beating fiercely down on the broad white street which constituted the principal thoroughfare of the Bay, when the boys reached it.

It had been arranged that Quamin was to share Harry's domicile during his apprenticeship and they now wended their way through a small yard to a very dilapidated building in the rear. Harry opened the door and went in, Quamin following him. Throwing down their bags they seated themselves on two empty boxes to rest, the best seats the room afforded.

Harry at once drew out a pipe and filling it began to smoke, while Quamin took in his surroundings with big brown eyes full of curiosity.

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## The Story of Quamin

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The room was fairly large and contained but a minimum amount of furniture. A rickety bed, such like a large box on four posts, occupied one corner; in another stood a rocking chair, or rather the skeleton of one, for the wicker seat and back had disappeared leaving behind a few straggling wisps of cane; and a table, black as night and spotted from end to end. This table was of solid mahogany and the tailor's apprentice had bought it for a mere song from an old woman in the Bay to whom it had come through the misfortune of the house where she had once served.

This was all the furniture, unless the two empty salt-fish boxes on which the boys sat might be reckoned as such, and the room was lighted by two jalousies, or shutter windows, both of which were in dilapidated keeping with the rest; still Quamin had not been used to much better and felt a thrill of joy as he remembered that he was now free from the vigilance of his grandmother

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## The Bay

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and able to follow pretty much his own devices.

When they were somewhat rested, the boys began to realise that, having eaten little as yet that day, they were hungry and Quamin followed Harry outside where, at the back of the house, the rustic fireplace of three large stones forming a triangle was soon filled with brambles and a brisk fire started.

A sump<sup>t</sup> dinner of salt fish and cocoas boiled together satisfied their hunger, and being still very tired after the long walk the two turned into bed just at sunset.

No evil dreams disturbed either of them and they woke with a start to find the sun shining through the broken jalousies right into their faces.

"Get up, Quamin!" said Harry, "for I mus' go to de shop before eight o'clock."

Quamin jumped out of bed and drawing on his trousers took a tin dipper and an old towel and ran down to the sea-shore at the

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## The Story of Quamin

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back of the house, where he hurriedly washed his face and hands in the salt water.

To light the fire once more was the work of a few moments and this time a little coffee and stale bun was all the boys needed.

It was just half past seven when Harry and his protégé arrived at the shop where the tailor was already busily at work.

Mr. Fernandez, a small mulatto man, in whose veins flowed some of the grandee blood of Spain, looked at Quamin sharply from under his spectacles as the boy was introduced by the apprentice. Evidently the investigation satisfied the tailor who, without asking any questions, put into Quamin's hand a sharp penknife with instructions to rip a coat which he handed at the same time to the boy.

Quamin took the garment, and seating himself cross-legged on the floor, went to work with such good will that when the day's work was done Fernandez offered to engage the new apprentice at a small weekly wage.



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## The Bay

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Quamin was delighted at his success; the busy life of the town was most acceptable to his restless nature and he was enchanted at the prospect of remaining amid its manifold attractions.

When Sunday came round, the boy from the mountains, according to custom, dressed himself for church, while Harry declared his intention of visiting a friend who lived some twelve miles distant from the Bay; so Quamin had to set out alone to encounter the many inquiring, curious glances cast at him by the rest of the congregation who knew him to be a stranger.

He entered the church timidly, waiting for the beadle to appoint him a seat, and when the one selected by the tall, thin old negro in the tight black gown proved to be near the door, the boy was glad since from thence he could see the people come in, and also watch the horses under the belfry shed where they patiently waited for the close of the service to take their owners home.

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## The Story of Quamin

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On a little bench which stood against the door, three little negroes sat: a boy and two girls who kept their eyes fastened on the beadle. When he was in sight their behaviour was exemplary and their eyes rolled up to the ceiling in steadfast devotion; but the moment his back was turned, they began an animated conversation.

By the time the sermon had begun they were showing signs of weariness, and before it was half finished had fallen asleep, leaning heavily on one another. Their repose was short, however, for a stray goat with an inquisitive disposition stole up to the door, and would have entered had not the beadle's eagle eye detected its intention.

Rising, he stalked across the church and the goat fled with a frightened "Bah!" just as the long staff would have descended upon its back.

The dignified old man stood a moment scowling at the animal who had taken refuge in the church yard, then turning to resume

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## The Bay

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his seat, caught sight of the sleepers. Down came the staff on the head of each offender in succession, and the children, less fortunate than the goat, sat up with a start and rubbed their sore heads.

Quamin pitied them but could not help smiling at the sight of their pouting lips and the angry looks they cast at the beadle.

The service being now over, he rose and went out with the rest of the congregation and at the gate was surprised to find Harry and a girl whom he recognised as a cake-seller of the Bay, in earnest conversation.

Harry greeted his friend with a nod, while Cubenna, his companion, tossed her head contemptuously and continued her conversation. Quamin, taking the hint that he was not wanted, returned Harry's nod and passed them by in silence.

This girl soon became a constant visitor at the home of the boys and for some time Quamin had taken her arrival as the signal for his departure; but when the visits became

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## The Story of Quamin

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a daily occurrence, he rebelled. He was paying half the rent of the room and was therefore entitled to remain in it according to his own convenience; so when she came again he did not leave, and staying, made a discovery that astonished him.

Harry and the girl, after waiting patiently for some time to see if Quamin would go and finally deciding that he had no such intention, held a whispered consultation which resulted in Harry bringing from a deal box hidden under the bed, a pack of cards and a bottle of rum.

The two sat gambling and drinking until Harry had lost his week's wages to his companion, then he rose and putting away the cards and bottle, went out with the girl into the night.

For some time Quamin refused all invitations to join in these orgies, but he was after all only human. and at last they had their way as far as gambling went, but with rum they could not tempt him.

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## The Bay

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One evening while the three were deep in a game of cards, there came a knock at the door; Harry opened it and in walked a short, thick-set sailor with a pair of blue serge trousers over his arm.

"Good-evening, Mr. Harry, I hope I don't intrude?" he said with a look and sly wink at the other two seated at the table.

"No, sah, no Missa Jacob," said Harry closing the door, "please sit down, sah?" he continued, pointing to the seatless chair.

The sailor laughed and picking up a board which lay by the chair and was meant for that purpose, placed it across the seat and sat down carefully.

"I want you to mend these trousers for me; can you do it and let me have them by mid-day to-morrow?"

"Oh! yes, sah. I sure can do dat. Meck me see dem, sah?"

The sailor threw the trousers over to Harry who after examining them again assured their owner that they could be easily mended

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## The Story of Quamin

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by the time required. Then he invited Mr. Jacob to try his hand at a game of cards to which the sailor readily agreed, only stipulating that he must leave at nine o'clock, that being the hour he was due on board his boat now riding at anchor in the harbour.

After a few games had been played of which Quamin had been most frequently the winner, Harry produced the bottle of rum, while Cubenna, at his bidding, collected all the drinking utensils and dipped up some fresh water from the pail with a quart jug.

Mr. Jacob accepted his grog without hesitation, but when Harry pushed a can of the same to Quamin, the boy shook his head, saying:

"You know dat I doan drink rum."

The sailor laughed derisively and Harry and Cubenna joined in.

"You know, Missa Jacob, Quamin goin' turn parson as soon as him done larn de tailor-in' business, so of course him carn drink rum."

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## The Bay

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"My boy," said Mr. Jacob solemnly as he drained his mug, "you will never be a man until you know the taste of spirits; just try it and see."

He put his hand affectionately on Quamin's shoulder and the boy could not resist the white man's influence. Timidly he raised the tin mug to his lips and tasting found it good, but fearful of its effects which he had seen more than once on Harry and Cubenna, drank only half the contents of the cup, and the game went merrily on.

Again Harry passed the drink around and Quamin's cup, now empty, was filled without protest, for the boy was already well under the influence of liquor and no longer aware of how much he was drinking. At last, unable to play any longer, he threw his cards on the table and rising staggered away to the bed, seeing which Harry's eyes shone with triumph.

The boy lay in a drunken sleep while the other three kept the game going far into the

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## The Story of Quamin

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night, sometimes one winning, sometimes the other until the sailor had lost all the money he carried with the exception of a few Spanish coins from Brazil, and in drunken anger accused Harry of cheating.

A quarrel quickly arose and the two men were soon fighting like wild beasts. The sailor being by far the more powerful would have surely got the better of his antagonist had he been less drunk, and even as it was, Harry's strength, never very remarkable, was giving out when Cubenna, who had watched the fight from a far corner of the room, ran forward, a long butcher knife belonging to Quamin in her hand.

The tailor's apprentice grasped the weapon and sent it up to the hilt in the body of his antagonist.

With a groan the sailor fell dead to the floor, while Harry stood over him, the dripping knife still in his hand. Suddenly he gave a cry of fear as the realisation of what he had done came to him.



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## The Bay

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"Cubenna! Cubenna!" he called in a hoarse whisper, "I kill him!"

The girl stood looking down at the dead man, then she kicked the corpse with her bare foot saying:

"W'at matter if you do so long as nobody doan know 'bout it? We mus' hide de body, dat 's all."

"But how we goin' to hide it?" asked the man, unable to devise any helpful plan.

"Come meck we bury it at de sea-shore," said the girl, "de night is so dark dat not a soul goin' see we, an' I will help you carry him down."

So saying, she stooped and rifling the corpse of a silver watch and the Brazilian gold, took hold of the dead man's feet, motioning Harry to his head. Thus they made their way through the darkness of the night with many stumbles to the sea-shore, where their burden was deposited while they sought a suitable spot for the grave; this they found in some soft sand overgrown with vines. With

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## The Story of Quamin

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the hoe and machette which Cubenna quickly brought from the house, they soon had a shallow grave dug, the dead man was lifted in, his body pinned to the ground by a stake driven through the middle of it, and covered with sand; the vines were carefully replaced and the two returned to the house to remove all further traces of the murder.

While they were wiping the blood from the rough floor, a bright idea came to Cubenna. Speaking in a whisper that she might not waken Quamin, she said:

"Meck we go 'way to-night, den w'en marnin' come you can come back an' if dem ask you, say you know not'ing 'bout de business. De ship goin' to sail at daylight and perhaps dem doan bodder to come look for de sailor man again."

Harry consented to this plan and the two hurriedly finished their cleaning and throwing the blood-stained house-cloth into the sea, they washed from their hands all traces of

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## The Bay

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the horrible deed and quietly crept away in the darkness.

The ship did not sail away at daylight as Cubenna had expected, and when Harry returned to the house early in the morning, he found an officer from the *Salome* knocking at the door.

As he came up the officer asked if this was where a tailor's apprentice named Harry Murdoch lived.

"I am de apprentice, sah," said the mulatto opening the door and stepping inside. The officer followed him.

"Did a sailor named Jacob come to you last evening with a pair of trousers to be mended?"

"Yes, sah; here is de trousers, sah," he said, picking up the garment from where it still lay on the arm of the rocking chair.

"Yes, those are the very ones. Now can you tell me where Jacob went after he left here?"

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## The Story of Quamin

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A grey shade crept over the guilty man's face, but he answered boldly:

"No, sah. Missa Jacob an' Quamin did begin to play card an' Missa Jacob get vex because he say Quamin was cheating him an' dem was on strong quarrelling w'en I lef' to go see one of me frien'."

"Who is Quamin?" asked the officer mystified.

"See him lying down dere in de bed, sah. I t'ink Quamin drink too much rum las' night an' him sleepin' still."

The officer went over to the bed and shook Quamin roughly by the shoulder.

"Here, wake up and tell me what became of Jacob after he left you?"

The boy sat up slowly and put his hand to his head. His face was swollen, his eyes bloodshot, and the sight of the officer startled him. In answer to the question put to him Quamin could only recall the fact that he had been playing cards with Harry and Cubenna and the sailor when a deadly sickness

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## The Bay

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seized him and stumbling to the bed he had lapsed into unconsciousness.

As Harry listened to this, he laughed mockingly and turning to the officer said:

"De boy drunk still, sah, for Cubenna was n't here at all las' night."

Quamin stared stupidly at Harry as though trying to decide whether this was lying on the part of his friend or his own memory at fault.

Just then the officer caught sight of the butcher knife which had been overlooked by the girl and the man the night before, and lay on the floor a blood-stained and tragic witness to the murder.

The officer wheeled round to Harry and pointing to the door said:

"Go and tell the Inspector that I want him here at once."

The boy obeyed without question, and in a few minutes returned with the head of the police force and his pet bull-dog.

"Good-morning, sir, good-morning!" he

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## The Story of Quamin

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said, saluting the officer of marines. "What is the trouble?"

As he listened to the story, his somewhat debonair manner changed to one of stern interest.

"We must search the premises," he said, and leaving Harry to keep guard over the suspected murderer, the two officers ransacked the room, discovering the blood-stained spot which Cuba had only partially cleaned.

The bull-dog sniffing at the spot, howled dolefully, and running to the door leading to the beach, tried to push it open with his fore paws.

The Inspector opened it and the dog bounded out and followed the path to the sea, where he ran about whining with his nose to the ground. At last he found where the dead man lay buried and began scratching the sand away. The Inspector cast a significant look at the officer as they hastened to the spot. The grave, hastily made, was not

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## The Bay

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deep and soon they had found what they sought, a gruesome sight enough.

The case came before the courts and on the day of the trial Quamin stood in the docks, his eyes riveted to the ground, for he dared not look at the little group of broken-hearted friends who waited in miserable anxiety.

At last the judge rose.

"Daniel Belteshazzar Fielding, you are found guilty of murder."

There was a scream and confusion in one corner of the court room, then two constables lifted Nana Dreckett from where she had fallen and carried her out.

Quasheba, who was with her, did not follow them, but remained chained to the spot. She must hear it all to the bitter end; must be there to send a last loving look at the prisoner before he was taken out.

In reply to the judge's question if he had anything to say in his own defence, Quamin hesitated for a moment, then in a scarcely audible voice murmured rather than said,

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## The Story of Quamin

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"Not guilty, you' Honour," but in truth he was by no means sure of his own innocence and rendered doubly miserable by the doubt.

The judge stood irresolute, then proceeded with the sentence. The prisoner had been recommended to the mercy of the court in consideration of his youth and former good character, therefore the sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment.

With his head still drooping, the boy was walked away between two constables through the throngs of people who had collected to hear the case, to the sea-shore where a boat waited to row him out to the coastal steamer bound for Kingston.

A few yards from the shore the prisoner turned to take a farewell look at the white streets of the town where he had found both pleasure and misery. Catching sight of Quasheba, he lifted his manacled hands and tried to wave to her, while the girl, drowned in tears, dragged the bandanna handkerchief from her head and returned his salutation.



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## The Bay

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Once on board the boat, he was locked into a cabin to which he had been conducted by one of the constables and a ship's officer. As they were leaving the cabin the latter said to the constable:

"What about that port-hole?"

"Oh! dat is all right, sah," replied the other, "him is from de mountains an' carn swim even if him could get t'rough de port-hole."

The officer was satisfied, and going out turned the key in the lock.

Quamin, left to himself, bowed his head upon his hands and gave way to the misery which possessed his soul. He almost wished the judge had condemned him to death, for the thought of a life spent behind the bars of a prison appalled this wild, freedom loving boy. His grandmother's scream still rang in his ears and Quasheba's tear-stained face haunted him.

How long he sat thus he knew not, but the turning of the key in the lock roused him

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## The Story of Quamin

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as one of the constables came in with his evening allowance of bread and water. No words were exchanged but the man pitied the boy while not daring to show his feelings.

Quamin tried to swallow a piece of bread but it was of no use and he threw it back on the tin plate and once more lost himself in thought.

The ship's bells had struck the hour of midnight and still Quamin had not moved; then the voice of the officer who had locked him into his cabin prison rang out on the clear night air. Quamin started. The conversation about the port-hole recurred to his memory and with it came an inspiration.

With something like his old energy, the prisoner jumped to his feet and measuring on his arm the width of the port-hole, laid his improvised yard-stick across his chest and smiled joyously to see that the space would admit of his body passing through with a little squeezing. Quickly he stripped him-

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## The Bay

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self and tying his shirt and trousers, the only articles of clothing that he wore, in a tight bundle, he took this between his teeth and swinging himself feet first through the narrow opening, dropped gently into the moonlit sea, without arousing the officer on the bridge, and nothing was known of the prisoner's escape until morning showed the empty cabin.

## XVI

### The Shop Changes Hands

**Y**EARS had passed since Quamin's condemnation and no trace of him having been found, the matter passed into the background of all memories excepting those to whom the boy had been very dear.

Nana Dreckett recovered from the illness which followed the trial, and went about her duties much as usual, but she stooped a little now and never went far without a stout walking stick to lean upon.

Constantine came often to see her and the talk almost always turned upon the dead boy, for such they believed Quamin to be. The affair had been clothed in mystery and there were some among the dwellers in the hills who had openly expressed dissatisfaction at the course taken by justice.

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## The Shop Changes Hands

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Harry had never been a favourite with them, and at his door some of the blame for Quamin's arrest had been laid; therefore when one day Barabas returned from the Bay with the news that Harry and Cubenna, now his wife, had bought the shop at the cross-roads and would instal themselves there shortly, the information was received with cold surprise.

The shopkeeper's life became a burden under the running fire of questions to which he was subjected by his customers and all the explanation that he had to give was that Harry had offered him good money for the shop of which he was tired and wanted a change.

To Quasheba the coming of Harry and "dat yallah snake," as she designated Cubenna, was a veritable misfortune for she would have no choice but to patronise them, since the shop was the only one of its kind within miles.

Barabas, now head pennkeeper in place of

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## The Story of Quamin

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Samuel, married and gone to another part of the Island, was one of the girl's most devoted admirers and came in very handy now to run errands for her since she had determined never to enter the premises of her enemies unless forced to do so.

He came every night to see the lady of his love and tell her all the local gossip, never murmuring when, in return, she only converted him into an errand boy.

Sitting together one night at the door of the house, Barabas remarked:

"You know, Quasheba, dem say dat Harry is as rich as de King of Englan'."

The girl sucked her teeth scornfully.

"Dem too fool; tell me w'ere him could get so much money?"

"Dem say him fin' one of de ole Spaniard jar bury in de yard of him house an' it did full of gol' money."

"I believe dem is tellin' lie, for if Harry ever fin' a t'ing like dat, him would n' res'

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## The Shop Changes Hands

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till him show it to everybody to meck dem see how smart him is."

"But him show two of de gol' piece to some man at de shop an' dem say is Spaniard gol' for true. Go ask Busha den if you doan believe me, for de man dem tell him 'bout it too."

"De firs' time I see Cousin Constantine I goin' to ask him, because Harry was Boas'ie Gordon boas' puss from time an' maybe him t'ief de money but him never fin' no Spaniard jar."

"All right, missis, hab it you' own fashion," replied the long-suffering Barabas rising to go, "me only tellin' you w'at me hear."

Long after her lover had gone Quasheba sat lost in thought. Barabas had whetted her curiosity and she longed to get a peep at those golden coins buried long ago at the time of the English occupation, by some wealthy Spaniard; so ran the negro superstition, and in spite of her asserted disbelief in the story, the girl did not discredit the possibility of such a find, and burned to know more.

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## The Story of Quamin

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When, therefore, Barabas called again, he was surprised that Quasheba had no commissions for him to execute at the shop, but she did not revert to their conversation of the evening before and he left her little dreaming that there was any connection.

The next afternoon Quasheba dressed herself carefully and as well as her limited wardrobe permitted and with a filling tied in the corner of her handkerchief, set out to make a few small purchases at the shop. Considering all the trouble she had taken with her toilet, it was disappointing to find no one there but a little coloured boy, who nevertheless served her deftly, and just as she was about to leave the place, a question occurred to her.

"Who live in dat new house de oder side of de gully over dere?"

"Dat is Missa Murdoch house, ma'm," the boy replied and Quasheba hesitated a moment as though about to ask for more information,



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## The Shop Changes Hands

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but thinking better of it, she wished the boy a curt good-evening and went out.

A bar of soap was among her purchases and this the boy had wrapped in a piece of gaily coloured paper, the brilliancy of which caught Quasheba's eye. She carefully removed the paper and smoothing out the creases, gazed in wonder and amusement at the picture of a jack-lantern which it displayed.

"Dis come out of Big Miss's' gran'chile book, dat I know; but Lard! de some'ting ugly for true an' 'nough to frighten any pick-'ney an' give him fits."

Looking up she spied Barabas who, as usual at this hour, was on his way to the evening tryst, and leisurely the girl replaced the paper round the soap, not wishing to attract the man's attention to her action.

"How come you to go to de shop you'self to-night, Quasheba?" he asked.

"Oh! me moder teck a fancy for arrowroot pap; you know she well mack-an-peckish, [fanciful] now, an' I could n' wait till to-

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## The Story of Quamin

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marra for you to buy it for me, so has to go meself."

"W'at Harry an' de yallah snake say to you?" inquired the man.

"I did n' see eider of dem. De boy sarve me an' him tell me dat de new house over de gully belongs to Harry."

"Yes, an' I hear dat dere is wonderful t'ings doin' in dat house after dark."

"W'at sort of t'ings?" asked the girl quickly.

"I doan know rightly meself, but you know Harry is a sort of obeahman, an' I hear dat him an' him wife 'pon strong countin' of de Spaniard money every night since dem come an' carn finish it yet."

"Lard!" exclaimed Quasheba, impressed in spite of herself. She was very thoughtful the rest of the way home, answering her lover in monosyllables, and when they reached the house, left him abruptly, to attend to the wants of her mother and grandmother, she said.

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## The Shop Changes Hands

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He sat on the bench outside the house smoking and meditating on the ways of women in general and this one in particular until she reappeared, smiling now, and seated herself beside him.

Barabas' hopes rose at a bound. He had never known Quasheba like this before and wondered if this changeableness betokened the dawn of love.

Timidly he slipped his arm round her waist and contrary to custom, she let it stay there. The opportunity now seemed too good to be lost, and Quasheba listened in demure silence to the love-making of this primitive man.

"Will you marry me, Quasheba?" he asked at last, and she, feeling that this was going a little too far, farther at any rate than she altogether liked, drew away from him saying:

"I doan know 'bout dat now. You mus' wait firs'."

"All right, me dear," said the lover, sure enough of his game to be willing to wait if

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## The Story of Quamin

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that was what his mistress' desired, and rose to go. Grown bold, he stooped and kissed her without leave.

Quasheba quickly drew her sleeve across her lips, but said nothing, and on his next visit he would have greeted her in like manner but the girl waved him off.

"Pramise me somet'ing firs'" she commanded.

"W'at is it?" he asked.

"Guess," said she.

"I doan know w'at you want me to pramise you, onless you jealous of how I go to see Janet Lacklin an' doan want me to go dere no more," smilingly said the too confident Barabas, but Quasheba sucked her teeth and tossed her head disdainfully.

"*Me* jealous! you will never see dat day! I want you to do somet'ing for me."

"Tell me w'at it is?" queried the man, a little disappointed, "an' if I can do it, I will."

"Go to de gully wid me to-night," said the girl boldly, watching his face the while.

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## The Slop Changes Hands

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"Go to de gully wid you to-night?" he repeated incredulously. "W'at you want to go to de gully for?"

"Never min'. Say you will go an' den you will fin' out."

"All right, if you want to go, but I doan has no fancy for dat duppy walk at all, at all, at night time."

"Well, I goin' see w'at Harry an' de yallah snake doin' an' I goin' watch dem t'rough dat winder dat doan finish yet."

Barabas gasped.

"Lard a' massey! Quasheba, you mus' be makin' poppyshow w'en you say dat; I doan believe say you mean it."

"I mean it for true; but if you 'fraid to come, say so at once an' I will go by meself an' you can go 'bout you' business."

The girl indignantly turned on her heel and was about to enter the house when Barabas stopped her.

"Quasheba, I will go wid you but you know if Harry fin' out, him will set

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## The Story of Quamin

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obeah for we, an' den we jus' as good as dead."

"Chow! Harry know as much 'bout obeah as me grannie mauger goat. You comin' or not?"

"Yes, I comin'," meekly responded the man.

She went into the house once again and came out deftly balancing on her head a bundle and carrying an umbrella.

"W'at you got in de bundle?" asked her lover.

"Shut you' mout' an' pull you' foot [walk fast]," she exclaimed, and they started out at a brisk pace.

By the time the gully was reached it had grown dark and Quasheba was suffering inward qualms, but she kept them to herself and assumed a fine scorn of Barabas' evident palpitations.

Down the side of the gully they scrambled, the bundle still balanced on the girl's head, across the rocky ravine which after a heavy

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## The Shop Changes Hands

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rain became a raging torrent, and up the steep bank on the other side where stood the hut.

A gleam of light shone between the wattled walls, and the two creeping cautiously by came to a halt behind some immense tree ferns. Here Quasheba lifted the bundle from her head and proceeded to loosen it.

Barabas watched her curiously and his wonder grew as she drew forth a white sheet, a large calabash with a face cut on it, after the manner of a jack-lantern, and a box of matches. Taking a piece of sheer white material from the bosom of her dress, she tied it over the calabash, then striking a match, she lit a small piece of a candle, set it in the calabash and turned the ghastly object towards Barabas.

The man yelled, but quickly recovering himself, put his hand over his mouth to keep himself quiet, while Quasheba scolded him in a wrathful whisper.

The door of the hut opened and Harry peeped cautiously out.

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## The Story of Quamin

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"Bery well! bery well! me did tell you so." Whispered Quasheba. "You see dat now? If you goin' to bawl like jackass lost him moder, you better go home."

"I won't bawl again, Quasheba, but de contraption dat ugly I could n't help meself."

The door was closed again and Quasheba, feeling safe once more, threw the sheet over the tip of the umbrella which she inserted into a hole in the lantern made for the purpose. Opening the umbrella, she held it over her head and the drooping sheet covered her dress to the hem.

Upon Barabas a light had broken, and he now watched Quasheba with undisguised admiration.

"Now come wid me," she said, and together they crept softly towards the hut, stopping close by the unfinished window. The hut had been hurriedly built, Harry explaining that it was only for their temporary use, and the wattled walls none too closely woven. Through one of these spaces Quasheba, the



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## The Shop Changes Hands

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umbrella frame resting on her head, the sheet thrown up in front, could watch what went on inside, while Barabas was busy at another peep-hole.

The mulatto and his wife were sitting one on either side of a rough deal table on which lay a silver watch and a few golden coins, and to the astonishment of the listeners, they learned that these two, reputed so wealthy, were, in truth, poor and deeply in debt to the merchant in the Bay from whom Harry had replenished the stock at the shop. They were now anxiously trying to decide how they could change into native coinage the gold that lay on the table.

"You t'ink," said Cubenna, "dat if we teck it to de Bay an' tell dem we fin' it bury up here in de mountain, dem will believe we?"

"I doan know 'bout dat, for I never hear no talk 'bout findin' Spaniard jar in de mountain, an' if dem did n't believe we an' ask too much question, we might get into trouble."

"Den w'at we goin' to do?"

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## The Story of Quamin

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"I doan know, onless we go on board one steamer an' try to sell dem to de Bostan touris' dem."

"Ahi! so for true, we can do dat. Meck we go soon, Harry."

"We goin' to-marra, but you know we has to 'teck softly softly ketch monkey,'" her husband said, using a well known negro proverb which translated means, "slow and sure win the day."

"Perhaps we could sell de watch too," said Cubenna, taking it up and examining it.

"No," replied her husband, "Missa Jacob name write 'pon de case an' if any of dem people in de Bay fin' out dat we got dat watch, we free paper burn, missis, an' dem would n' teck long to fin' out is me an' not Quamin dat kill him."

Quasheba had heard every word of this dialogue and trembled so that her knees knocked together. Plucking at Barabas' sleeve, she whispered:

"You hear w'at dem say?"

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## The Shop Changes Hands

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The man nodded and continued to listen, while Quasheba, her heart beating to suffocation, returned her eyes to the hole.

Harry gathered up the coins and watch and put them into a small iron box which he locked away in a trunk. The rum bottle was now brought to light and the two fell to drinking.

For a long time the eavesdroppers waited, but when it became evident that no more information would be forthcoming, Quasheba, whose composure had returned, lifted the draped umbrella and calabash head to the window, at the same time uttering stifled moans.

Cubenna, who had been sitting with her back to the window, looked around quickly, and encountering the ghostly object with its grinning fiery teeth, screamed, and Harry looking up hastily, saw what he took to be the sailor's ghost come to haunt him, and dived under the bed.

Cubenna sat huddled up on her seat, too

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## The Story of Quamin

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frightened to do more than turn her back on the ghost who, after folding and unfolding its arms a few times, uttered a piercing shriek and disappeared.

Quasheba emerged from beneath her disguise laughing at the remembrance of Harry's legs sticking out from under the bed, and Cubenna's cowering form.

"Lard! Barabas, w'ere is you' obeahman now?" she asked as they hurried back to the sheltering tree ferns.

"Quasheba, I never see a woman so strong-physic strong-minded] as you from I born!" he exclaimed. "But meck has' an' come home for rain fallin' already an' big storm comin'."

It was the work of a minute to make the sheet and calabash again into a bundle and the two started on their homeward way. Long before they reached Cousin 'Lizbet's house, the storm had broken and both were drenched to the skin.

"You can sleep in de kitchen, so no use

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## The Shop Changes Hands

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you go home to get drown altogedder," said Quasheba, and Barabas, only too glad to be spared the long walk to his own house in the darkness and storm, accepted gladly.

The hurricane of that night was the worst that the Island had known for many years, and there was little sleep for the community who, seeing it coming, had weighted the thatched roofs of their cottages with heavy stones, in spite of which many of them had been blown away.

Quasheba was early astir next morning to get Barabas some hot sugar and water before he left, and Cousin 'Lizbet' who had slept little and pondered much during the night watches on her granddaughter's absence of the evening before, was also up and doing, just in time to see Barabas disappearing over the brow of the hill on which the cottage stood.

"W'at you doin' out so late, las' night, Quasheba?" she demanded sternly as the girl came in, surprised to find the old woman up.

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## The Story of Quamin

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"I did go to de shop, Grannie, an' de rain ketch me half way home, so I has to save wedder [seek shelter] in one house on de road-side."

"Did you have anybody wid you?"

"No, Grannie; only me one, an' I mos' frighten to deat' wid de noise de t'under meckin'."

"Chile, you tellin' lie, for I hear you talkin' to somebody w'en you come in an' I jus' see Barabas gone down de hillside."

Quasheba, like the rest of humanity, hated to be caught in a lie, and brushed rudely past her grandmother into the house, muttering:

"Ole woman always know so much!"

. . . . .

"Cubenna! Cubenna!" came a timid whisper from under the bed, "it gone yet?"

"Yes," replied his wife 'but who know if it comin' back or not?"

"*Doan* say so, Cubenna," pleaded Harry

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## The Shop Changes Hands

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in anguish at the horrid possibility; "give me a drink."

Cubenna stooped and handed the bottle to her husband who was still concealed under the bed, and for the next half hour the woman sat gazing with dread at the window.

The wind was now rising, and every time it blew past the hut, the little half finished dwelling rocked in an alarming manner, and Cubenna was growing afraid to remain in it any longer.

"Harry," she called, "meck we go outside before de house tumble down."

But only the heavy snoring of her husband answered her, and rising she crept timidly to the door. It was not the storm she feared, but the reappearance of the "duppy" who might be lurking around still.

She opened the door quietly and peeped out, but there was nothing save the heavy raindrops and sighing wind to greet her, and into this she stepped bravely enough.

Just then a gust heavier than the rest

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## The Story of Quamin

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blew against the hut and with a noise as of tearing wood, it fell to the ground in ruins. The woman fled shrieking into the darkness and down the bank of the gully, not realising in her frenzied condition the dangers of such a course.

The next day, when the storm had cleared away, she was found lying at the bottom of the gully, drowned, her wet garments wound round the stem of a sapling, while the body of her husband lay buried beneath the débris of the ruined hut.



## XVII

### The Exile

**B**ELIEVING Quamin dead, no effort was made to find him and the young fellow might never have known that the ban of murderer had been lifted from him had not a trifling incident revealed the truth.

Once over the side of the steamer, he had swum under water for a short distance to escape the observation of the officer on the bridge, then striking out boldly for the shore, reached it in a state of exhaustion, for the distance traversed had been no mean one. Resting on the sandy beach, he tried to decide upon his future course of action.

He concluded that it would be necessary to keep close to the sea-shore where he could always get fish, and when daylight broke, he found to his great joy a cave beneath a pro-

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## The Story of Quamin

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jecting rock in which he might lie for ever hidden.

Close by was a grove of thatch palms, and with the leaves of these he soon made a fish pot which he set, wading as far out as he could, then returning spread his clothes on the palm trees to dry and retired to the recesses of the cave until night-fall.

Thus he lived for two months, and then, judging that search for him would have been abandoned, he decided to make his way along the coast to Montego Bay, where a steamer might be found to take him to Colon.

The way was long and Quamin found it hard work tramping at night and living on the fruit he might steal or the fish he might catch, but at last Montego Bay was reached and fortune favoured him. A Royal Mail steamer was making ready to depart, first to England, then back by way of New York to Colon, the place he had hit upon as being most likely to afford him shelter. She was short of hands and when she steamed out

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## The Exile

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of harbour, Quamin went with her, a duly enrolled member of the crew.

With his usual adaptibility, the boy had fitted very comfortably into life at busy Colon, but had never ceased to mourn his ostracism from the place of his birth and the heart of his friends, and every time that a steamer was reported coming from Jamaica, he would go down to the wharf, and himself hidden, for he still dreaded detection, would watch the passengers landing, eagerly scanning each face, hoping yet dreading to see a familiar one among them.

On one such occasion he had left his vantage ground and was following the last passenger up the street when a newspaper fell from the over-laden hand of the latter. Quamin quickly picked it up and politely handed it to the gentleman who, with a glance at the paper said, "I don't want it, my good fellow," and passed on.

Eagerly the boy opened the paper, for news from Jamaica was scarce indeed and

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## The Story of Quamin

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the first thing that met his eye was a bold headline, "Daniel Belteshazzar Fielding not Guilty." Greedily the boy read on, the whole story of the discovery of Harry's guilt and consequent establishment of his own innocence; then the paper fell from his hand, and divested now of that gravity of demeanour which had marked his bearing during his term of exile, the young man reverted in a flash to the old joyous ways of early boyhood and there in the public street stood on his head for joy.

To pack his belongings was the work of a few moments, and the good ship which had brought him news of his freedom carried Daniel Belteshazzar Fielding back to Jamaica, a passenger this time with a well filled purse, for money had been easy to get in Colon.

## XVIII

### The Return

"YOU know," said Constantine to his sister when on a visit to her a few days after Quamin had set sail from Colon, "dis marnin' Big Missis show me a strange t'ing in de papers. She show me de same name as Quamin got on de lis' of passenger on one of de boat. Now how come dat?"

Nana Dreckett, who had listened with interest, shook her head slowly, saying despondently:

"I doan know, for I meck up dat name for meself out of de Book an' give it to Quamin."

Suddenly her manner changed and she turned to her brother in great excitement.

"Bredda, you t'ink say Quamin livin'?"

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## The Story of Quamin

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The man shook his head and taking the pipe from his mouth, answered slowly:

"No, Nana, Quamin is wid de Lard."

The voice of Quasheba talking to her grandmother as she helped the old woman along, afforded a break in the conversation and Nana rose to greet her old friend.

Presently the conversation reverted to what Constantine had seen in the paper and Nana Dreckett longingly put the question as to the possibility of Quamin's being yet alive, to Cousin 'Lizbet'.

"For you know, Cousin, you did prophesy dat him would be a mighty preacher an' stan' by de altar of de Lord."

"I did so, Mrs. Dreckett," replied the other with much dignity, "an' de prophecy has been fulfil'."

"How so, Cousin?"

"Quamin is now a mighty preacher in Heaven, for las' night I saw in a vision de New Jerusalem, an' dere was Quamin liftin' up his vice an' speakin' to de multitude, jus'

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## The Return

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as I say he would. An' w'at more do you want, sister?"

This was cold comfort to the old woman who was crying quietly, and Quasheba to console her said:

"You know, Grannie, dat you' vision doan always right an' you did eat a powerful lot of blue cocoa las' night before you go to bed."

"Chile," replied the prophetess severely, "blue cocoa has not'ing to do wid vision dat de Lard sen'. Dem as come from de Debbil I know not'ing 'bout. Come, it is time to go home."

Soon Constantine went too, and Nana Dreckett, left alone, lit her little lamp and sought a panacea for her aching heart in the well worn Bible out of which Quamin's name had been chosen, but finding reading impossible through her fast falling tears, she shut the book and fell upon her knees to pray, pouring out her heart's sorrow and disappointment to her God in reverent intimacy.

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## The Story of Quamin

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So engrossed was she, that the gentle rapping at her door passed unnoticed and Quamin had to let himself in.

Silently he stood at the door, listening to the old woman's prayer until he could bear it no longer, then, with tears streaming down his face:

"Grannie, Grannie," he said, "I come home!"

Nana Dreckett rose slowly to her feet and believing the boy to be risen from the dead, grew afraid.

"Lard have massey on me dis night!" she murmured and would have fallen had he not caught her in his arms. Gently he placed her on the chair and kneeling beside her, took her hands between his own.

"Grannie, look at me. It is not duppy, but me—Quamin. I never drown at all like dem say in de papers."

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Seven years later, one morning when Constantine was riding through the pastures to



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## The Return

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his sister's house, he espied two little figures standing at the pond side, the one holding a tin dipper, the other a long stick. The man laughed softly and said:

"Jus' so dem fader an' moder used to do. It is true w'at dem say in de Bible dat de sin of de parents come down to de children; but ketchin' bull-frog is only a foolishness, an' no sin, tenk de Lard!"



## Other Tales



## Mary and Marth

THE night had been wet and stormy and the pastures were under water, the trees bowed down by the weight of their sodden leaves looked drowned and lifeless, the birds were too cold and damp to give forth more than a feeble chirp, and the tree-toad had gone to rest after his nocturnal labours. All the tropical world seemed tired and heavy-eyed like a child after a violent fit of weeping.

By an akee tree stood a stalwart negro man, gazing at a piece of rope that encircled its trunk. At last he gave vent to his feelings and shaking his head slowly from side to side, said:

"Well! dat's de mos' surprisin' piece of business I ever see. Dere is dat hog gone now an' it was dis bery day dat Missa Ramsey

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## Other Tales

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was comin' to take him away. Dat's one whole poun' of Missis Queen money los' from me by dat rainy wedder las' night; an' w'at I goin' to do?"

"W'at 's de matter wid you, Joseph?" asked Mrs. Andrews coming out of the house and seeing her husband talking to the tree.

"Oman, you is a fool if you carn see dat me bes' hog gone. Dere is de rope, but w'ere is me hog?"

"Lard! Joe, somebody t'ief him," returned Mrs. Andrews with decision. "I bet you it is dat same black neager Ramsey, an' by dis time de hog is well butcher an' cut up. Oh! dat is a bad man an' belongs to de Debbil, sartin."

"So you t'ink dat it is Missa Ramsey t'ief him? But Carlo no would have bark if anybody come into de yard at night time?"

"Carlo know Missa Ramsey, an' if him jus' speak to de dog an' give him one ole bone, w'ere de dog would fin' mout' to bark wid?"

"Dat 's de trut' w'at you say, but anyhow

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## Mary and Martha

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everybody mus' turn out an' look for dat hog, because him maybe only pop him rope an' run 'way how de rain come down 'pon him las' night. Wake up dem lazy pick'ney an' tell dem to go 'long go sarch for de pig."

Mrs. Andrews re-entered the house, and going to the room where the three girls slept, managed, after much shaking and calling, to awaken her daughters.

"Come! get up," she said as they stretched themselves and rubbed their eyes, "you fader hog gone an' him say you mus' get up an' go sarch for him."

"Puppa los' him pig?" repeated Mary jumping up and getting hold of her clothes, while Martha turned slowly over, muttering:

"Chow! dat hog is a pure boderation an' I wish him might never come back agen."

"You want you' fader to lost one whole poun' because you is too lazy to feed de hog? Get up at once an' don' meck I get vex'."

Then turning to Queen Anne, the youngest, a

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## Other Tales

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child of six years, who was sobbing audibly, she asked roughly, "W'at you sit down in dat corner for an' bawlin' like say jackass behin' foot ketch you 'pon you jaw corner? W'at 's de matter wid you?"

"Missa—Missa—igh!igh! Missa Ramsey, igh! did promise me de tail Saturday, an' now I—igh! I wont get none! Igh—eee—ee!

"Pick'ney, you too fool," returned her mother walking away in disgust from her daughters.

A few minutes more found the search party ready to start, with bare feet and dresses tied high and dry by means of a cord around the hips which caught up the skirts in a large fold just below the waist.

"I 'se comin' wid you, Mary," said little Queen.

"I 'se sure I doan want you wid me," returned Martha tartly. "I will teck Carlo. Come, Carlo! come!"

But Carlo sat on his haunches slowly wagging his tail from side to side and looking at



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## Mary and Martha

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Martha with wide open, innocent eyes as though he was too simple to understand what she said.

"Come, Carlo, come!" she repeated, but the dog would not move, so, picking up a stick she threw it at him with all her might, muttering, "Ole fool! All him know 'bout is how to eat," and walked off alone.

Carlo dodged the stick successfully; he was used to such delicate attentions from Martha, and remained at a safe distance until she was out of sight, then he bounded after the other two girls, who had also started on their mission.

In the delight of walking through all the deepest puddles she could find and watching the water gush up between her little naked black toes, Queen Anne forgot her disappointment in the lost pig's tail and trotted happily along, chattering all the while like a little parrakeet.

"Mary, w'at is dem? Is n't dem junjoe, an' don't dem pisin?" she asked as they

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## Other Tales

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passed a little cluster of pearly white mushrooms peeping out through the green grass.

"Yes," replied Mary.

"Well, I see dat bockra [white] lady w'at live at Grove Hill, me forget him name, I see her pick one whole tray load of dem t'ings one day an' w'en I ax her w'at dem good for, she say she goin' eat dem."

"Oh! Bockra know how to obeah de pisin out of dem, but if *you* was to eat one, you would dead right off."

"Lard!" exclaimed Queen in a frightened tone. Then after a few minutes of quiet thinking, she asked, "Sister, is dat w'at obeahman use w'en dem want to kill somebody?"

"Shet you' mout', pick'ney an' doan call obeahman name dat way. You doan know dat dem can hear you w'erever dem is an' dem would soon ketch you shadder in a bottle an' kill you."

"Lard!" once more said Queen, whose face had changed colour while her sister spoke.

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## Mary and Martha

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After this the two girls walked on in silence a good way, Mary swinging the rope she had brought in case the pig should be found, her thoughts far away, while Queen kept casting furtive glances all around fearing every minute to see an obeahman appear with a bottle in his hand. Suddenly Carlo made a dash forward into a clump of bushes and immediately a fierce grunting followed.

"Carlo got him! Carlo got him!" cried both girls at once as they ran to the spot where Carlo, who had "got him," was holding on to the pig by the ear while the unfortunate animal was doing his best between squeals and struggles to get away.

In a jiffy Mary had made a noose with the end of the rope and got it round one of the pig's hind legs; then they drove off Carlo and putting the other end of the rope around the struggling creature's neck, and releasing his leg, they started for home a triumphant little band, all but poor piggy, who followed reluctantly, getting many a little nip behind

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## Other Tales

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from Carlo just to keep him going, and showing his indignation by standing bristles and fiercely chopping jaws.

When they reached home it was to find Martha still absent, but of this no one took much heed, knowing full well that she was calculated to take good care of herself.

When twin daughters were born to Mrs. Andrews, she named them in accordance with local superstition, Mary and Martha, but nature declining to aid superstition, reversed the accepted order of things and contrary to expectation, gave to Mary, a sweet face and lovable character while to Martha's share fell the husks, both physical and mental, and an uglier negro girl than this latter, it would have been difficult to find. Her temper matching her face, she was of course jealous of her more favoured sister and hated Mary with a bitter hatred.

This morning she was in one of her darkest moods and went on her way grumbling at

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## Mary and Martha

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Mary, Queen Anne, and the pig, first cause of all the disturbance.

"Hi! me darter, w'ere is you goin' so soon in de marnin' an' w'y meck you can't stop an' say howdie to de ole man?"

Thus accosted, Martha raised her head with a start to see Gran'pa Baldie sitting at the door of his hut, enjoying his coffee and the fresh morning air at the same time.

"Marnin', Gran'pa," said she crossing her hands at her waist and dropping a rapid curtsey. "I 'se dat busy lookin' for me pa wort'less hog dat I never know I was passin' you' house till you call me. De smell of you' coffee is very good an' sweet, sah; is you got any to spare a poor gal dis cole marnin'?"

"Well, me chile, if you will step up an look in dat pan on de fire, mebbe you will fin' some, an' de goat is jus' onder de house, so you can go milk w'at you want an' welcome."

"T'ank you, Gran'pa," Martha replied as she took the pan from off the open air hearth composed of three bricks set close together

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## Other Tales

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with a small fire of brambles burning between them. Then pouring the coffee into a jam tin which had done duty as the old man's milk jug, she crept under the house where the goat stood with a couple of kids beside her, and obtaining the desired addition to her coffee, returned to old Baldie and sat down by him.

As she slowly sipped the steaming fluid, her grievances which had been for the while forgotten returned in full force, and with them came the remembrance of something she had heard about this old man.

"Give me you' mug, Gran'pa, an' I will go wash it for you," Martha said, taking hold of his empty cup and walking into the house before he had time to reply. He rose as quickly as his crippled limbs would permit, and hobbled after her. Inside the house he seated himself on an empty salt fish box and taking a very black clay pipe from his pocket, said:

"Me chile, jus' go bring me one fire coal from de fire to light me pipe."

As Martha went through the door, the

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## Mary and Martha

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old man rose hastily, crossed the hut, and taking a small bottle off the top of a cupboard, put it in his pocket and regained his seat just as Martha apparently absorbed in the carrying of a live coal, appeared at the door.

"Ah! t'ank you, me dear. I wish I did have a darter like you to teck care of me in me ole age."

Martha shrugged her shoulders doubtfully, and said:

"To tell you de truth, Gran'pa, I is glad I is n't you' darter because I hear dem say you is obeahman, an' I 'fraid for obeahman."

"Me obeahman, me? De one dat tell you so is a liard an' I wish dat Nebuchadnayzer de prince of de debbils may ketch him an' throw him inna de bottomless pit wid brimstone an' bilin' lead. Who tell you such a t'ing as dat? It mus' be dat liard an' t'ief Mash-mout' Samuel dat want to teck away me decent character for him come de odder day an' lay claim 'pon me goat an' say it belongs to him. [Baa! said the goat of Mash-mout'

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## Other Tales

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Samuel from under the house.] De liard, w'en him know well dat de goot is de one me cousin Sarah sen' from Negri come give me! May de Lard strike me dead if dat is not de truth w'at I say, I know not'ing 'bout obeahman an' I doan like hear obeahman name call in dis house."

Baldie leant his back against the wattled side of his hut and puffed fiercely at his pipe while Martha quietly finished drying the mug and cans.

When she had finished she said:

"Dem is all clean now an' I jus' goin' put dem in dat cupboard."

"No! no! leave dem dere," shouted Baldie jumping up to stop Martha, but she was too quick for him and had opened the cupboard door before he caught her hand.

The sight of a human skull, some bones of animals, and other débris commonly used in the trade of obeah, made the girl scream, and throwing down the things she held she fled to the other side of the hut.



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## Mary and Martha

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"Gal, doan be a fool. W'at you 'fraid for?"

"Gran'pa, I tell you dat you is obeahman an' you say you is n't; den w'at you want wid dem t'ings in you cupboard?" replied Martha, her voice trembling with fear.

"Well, me darter, if I do work a little obeah now an' den, dat is no reason w'y you should call me obeahman. Dat is a ugly name, an' if constab hear it dem would teck me to de court house; now I is a peaceable man, an' walk in de ways of de Lard, an' I hope you won't meck nobody know w'at you see today."

"W'at is dat you got in de vial in you pocket, sah?"

"Vial I got in me pocket? Well! I never see such a gal from I born. How you know dat I got vial in me pocket, eh?"

"Hi! Gran'pa I did see you put de bottle in you' pocket w'en me comin' wid de fire-coal."

"Gal, you' eye too sharp. Dat bottle have somet'ing to kill mongoose an' rat an' I buy

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## Other Tales

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it in de Bay las' Saturday because de varmint is eatin' up all me fowl."

"Lard! sah, I beg you give me little to set in we cane piece, for ratta is cuttin' all we cane." Seeing hesitation in the old man's expression, Martha added craftily, "If you give me some, Gran'pa, I wont tell nobody dat you is obeahman."

The little ferrety eyes of the girl closed menacingly as she spoke and Baldie realised that to yield to her request was the only way to stop her tongue, so pouring half the contents of the bottle he had thought to conceal into an empty one from the cupboard, he gave it to Martha saying:

"Now, me darter, if you is in a hurry to kill dem rat, one teaspoonful; if you want to punish den for de damage to you' cane, two drops every day, an' dem will cut less an' less cane every day till dem dead."

"T'ank you, sah," said Martha with a look of comprehension and dropping a curtsy,

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## Mary and Martha

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then she took the bottle and her leave of Gran'pa Baldie.

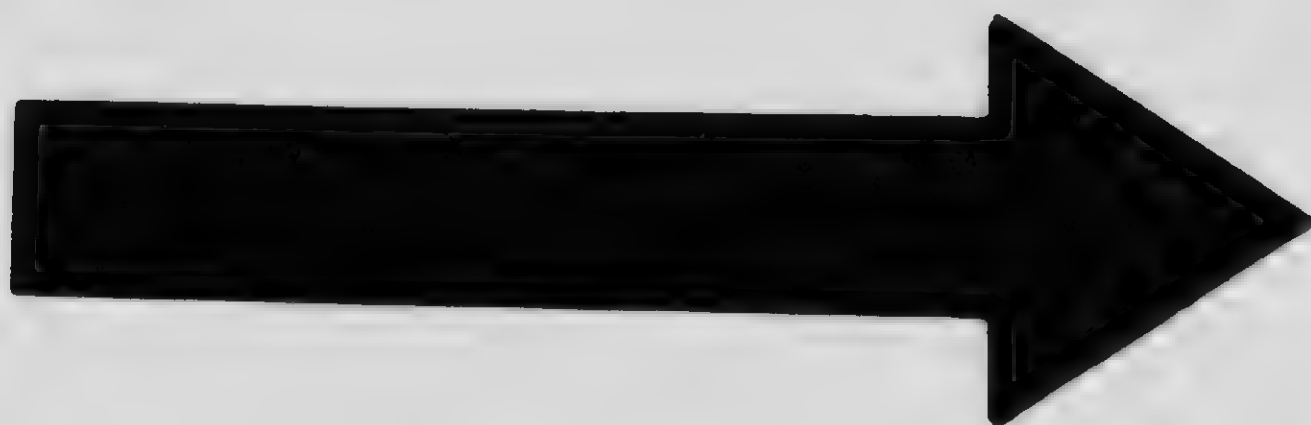
"Good-bye, me chile, may de blessin' of Moses an' of Pharaoh res' 'pon you, an' remember w'at I say, one teaspoonful to do de business quick, two drop every day for punishment. An' noder t'ing doan forget, dat everyt'ing you see not good to talk 'bout."

When Martha arrived home, she was not overjoyed to see her charge once more tied to the akee tree and she could not resist giving a vicious kick to poor piggy as she passed.

"W'ere you been all dis time, Mart'a?" demanded Mrs. Andrews.

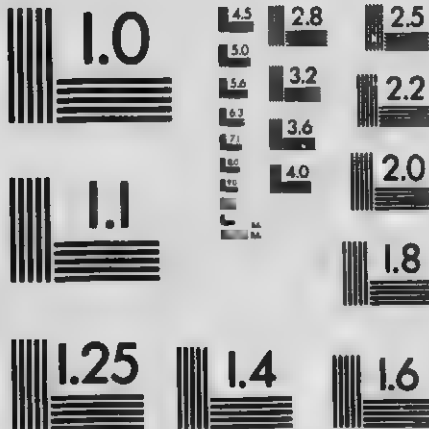
"Oh! I walk, walk all over de place sarchin' for dat hog an' all de time him did well tie 'pon de tree agen. Doan bodder me, but give me me breakfas' for I mos' dead wid hungry."

Catching sight of Queen Anne who stood at the kitchen door scratching one leg with the bare toes of the other foot and gloating



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## Other Tales

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over her recovered chances of the pig's tail, Martha exclaimed

"Good fader! look 'pon Queen! De pick'ney stan' 'pon one foot an' starin' at de pig wid water runnin' out of him mout' like hungry dawg watch bone. I jus' hope Missa Ramsey doan give you de tail after all de way you so greedy after it."

"Go 'long, go get you breakfas', you too shurance," replied the little sister with a toss of her head.

"Shurance, eh? I will teach you to call you' betters shurance, you little black neager you!"

Martha made a dive at Queen Anne who slipped off like an eel and in a moment was gone round the house where she stood grinning and putting out her tongue at her sister. An unripe akee whizzed past her head, with which parting shot Martha turned into the kitchen and got her breakfast herself.

Next day, Mrs. Andrews and Mary went to the Bay, as the little sea-port town was called, to do their marketing leaving Martha

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## Mary and Martha

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in charge. When twilight began to fall, and about the time they might reasonably be expected home, Andrews told Queen that he had sold a penny-halfpenny worth of akees to Mrs. Frummage and she must have them picked before Seraphina Frummage came for them.

"All right, Puppa," said Queen and was at the top of the tree in a minute. Akee after akee fell, then there came a lull. The tree stood at some distance from the house but close to the kitchen the roof of which was half gone, and into the aperture Queen Anne was gazing as she lay flat on a projecting branch.

"Queen, is dem akee pick yet?"

"Yes, Puppa, I jus' finish," she replied coming quickly down the tree at the root of which Seraphina waited with her basket. The two children stopped to have a chat before picking up the fruit but were interrupted by Martha who, coming to the kitchen door, called to her sister to stop chatting and come

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## Other Tales

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and mind the pot of soup while she went to the pepper bush for another green pepper.

"Dat Martha, I *hate* him!" said the little girl to Seraphina as she turned reluctantly to the kitchen.

Soon after this Jane and her daughter arrived and while they were busy relating all they had seen and heard at the Bay, Martha was pouring the pepper-pot into a row of basins that stood on the kitchen table each of which belonged exclusively to some member of the family and was never used by any other.

Dinner over, they retired to the house and when the mother had lighted a small lamp which stood on the table, the women folk brought out various pieces of plain sewing, while Joseph, the male and therefore privileged member, filled his pipe with native tobacco and puffed contentedly away.

A scream from Martha broke the silence of the workers and the others looking up with startled inquiry, saw her throw up her hands



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## Mary and Martha

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and fall backwards off the box on which she had been sitting.

"Oh! Lard, Lard, Lard, I dead! help! help!" she screamed, rocking from side to side.

"Me poor pick'ney is on dyin', Joseph, look 'pon him! W'at we goin' to do?" implored the mother, terrified almost out of her senses.

"Go bring Gran'pa Baldie, meck has'," gasped Martha between her groans.

"Yes, yes, Joseph, him can work cure! Go get de jackass an' go for him quick as you can."

Joseph rushed out of the house and dragging the unwilling donkey out of the enclosure in which he usually spent the night, hastily threw an old corn sack across his back, a rope around his head, and digging his heels into the poor animal's sides, started at full gallop for the obeahman.

Meanwhile her mother and Mary were doing their best to give the sufferer ease and Queen Anne, huddled up in a corner of the room, watched them in speechless terror.

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## Other Tales

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Almost before tney expected him Joseph came back trotting beside the donkey with Gran'pa Baldie seated on its back, his feet almost touching the ground. Helping the old man to alight, Andrews took him to the room wherein lay the sick girl.

"Ah! me darter, you is mos' dead I see," said the magician rubbing his hands in evident satisfaction.

"Yes, Gran'pa, save me! save me!" she implored.

"Yes, I will save you, but everybody mus' go out of de room an' lef' only me an' you, else de charm won't work."

The family silently filed out before the command of superior knowledge and the wizard turning to his patient, said:

"Mart'a, you been tryin' to work obeah wid dat rat p'isin I give you an' de obeah turn 'pon you'self. Teck dis an' drink it at once or you never live to see to-morra."

He handed her a small calabash cup the contents of which the patient drank eagerly,

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## Mary and Martha

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while the obeah doctor made mysterious passes over her with his hands at the same time muttering a deep voiced incantation.

It did not take long for the powerful antidote he had given her to do its work, and when she was somewhat recovered, he said:

"You mus' give me back dat rat p'isin or obeah will ketch you again, an' de secon' time it ketch you, you *mus'* dead, not'ing can save you life."

"If you look in dat crab hole jus' inside de kitchen close to de post, you will fin' de bottle, Gran'pa, but I never will try to use obeah again for is only dem w'at understan' it can handle it right," replied the girl in a weak voice.

After Baldie had assured the anxious parents of their daughter's safety and taken his leave and Andrews got home with the donkey ridden by the magician, Mary went out to give the animal water and Queen Anne followed her.

"Mary," she said, "I see Mart'a drop

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## Other Tales

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somet'ing out of a bottle into you' basin dis evenin' w'en I was 'pon de akee tree, den I see her hide de bottle in de crab hole in de kitchen, an' w'en she would n't meck me talk to Seraphina but sen' me away to min' de soup, I go get de bottle an' pour some into for her basin, den I wash for you basin an' jus' lef' few drop of water in de bottom, an' how de somet'ing she did put in white like water, she never know de difference. I t'ink dat is w'at meck her sick."

Mary made no answer for she believed Queen Anne was right.

## Forbidden Fruit

FRAU von Helmsdorf sat at the door of the Moravian mission house busily turning the heel of a white cotton sock destined for the honest German foot of her "Mann" the missionary. Together he and she had come out fifteen years earlier to this unknown tropical land wherein they had since laboured unceasingly for humanity and the Gospel; but going to and fro upon his Master's business was no longer easy to von Helmsdorf. He was growing stout and unwieldy.

In earlier years his dutiful Frau had considered it a special dispensation of Providence in their favour that the Island provided her larder with so many delicacies, and even now she refused to entertain his occasional fear, which came only with indigestion, that the

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## Other Tales

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Enemy had somewhat ensnared him through his liking for the things of the table. When quite well, the good missionary rose superior to the fancy and went on getting fatter and fatter.

Now, seeing him come towards the house with frowning brows and hurried, angry footsteps, his wife rose and went to meet him with some anxiety.

"Mein Fritz, what is the matter?" she asked in their mother tongue, laying her hand on his arm.

"Matter," he replied fiercely, "the matter is that the thieves have been at my bread-fruit again and there is not one left on it that is fit to pick."

"Is that all?"

"All! and is that not enough? Ach! mein Frau, you like not the fruit yourself."

"You look so very angry, Fritz, I thought it must be some new trouble, but this thing has happened so often now, you ought to mind it no more."

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## Forbidden Fruit

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"As I said before, you like not the fruit yourself, Frau," he returned irritably, then his face changed quickly to pleased anticipation as a curtseying black girl came to the door and announced dinner ready.

The short tropical twilight was changing quickly to dusk as they entered the house, the girl vanishing noiselessly before them, her bare feet making no sound on the polished floor.

The meal was taken in silence except for the good man's gobbling, and when they had left the dinner table for the cooler verandah with its comfortable old fashioned rocking chairs, Herr von Helmsdorf puffed away at his pipe as if lost in meditation, so that his wife gave up conversational attempts and went quietly to sleep.

As the missionary sat buried in thought, the fireflies might flit in and out between the leaves of the india-rubber tree, the Southern Cross, his favourite among the starry host, might shine with more than usual brilliancy,

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## Other Tales

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and the thousand voices of the tropical night call to him ever so tenderly, all in vain: he was too much engrossed in unwonted thoughts of revenge upon the robber of his bread-fruit tree.

Moodily he sat puffing away until long after his usual bed hour until his wife awoke in her chair and induced him to retire for the night.

Meanwhile "Minister's" mood was a subject of comment in the kitchen. Jemima, the maid who had summoned them to dinner, declared that "somet'ing mus' be do Minister an' vex him for true, because him never remember to ask for fry plantain t'ree time."

"You doan know w'at do him, den?" asked Ahab, the pennkeeper, indifferently.

"No. De Missis go to meet him on do gravel walk an' him mus' be tell her, but as dem talkin' dem own gibberish, I could n' meck out w'at dem sayin', I only ketch one word, bread-fruit."



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## Forbidden Fruit

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"Did him carry any in him han'?" asked Sarah the cook quickly.

"No."

"Ahey! den I know w'at do Minister. Dem t'iefn' him bread-fruit agai- because dis afternoon w'en him going out him see me at de door an' him holler sav. 'Cook, I goin' bring you one splended one for breakfas' to-marra an' if you spoil it, I will stop two week wages from you.' Him only say dat because him know well I never spoil a single bread-fruit since I come her- ten year gone las' July. I know de way him love dem an' always teck care dat dem roas' good, good. Is a sin for anybody to t'ief from Minister, because him good to everybody an' does spen' him time prayin' to Massa up a' top to save we poor sinful soul from de Debbil."

Sarah seated herself on a small bench close to the kitchen door with satisfaction at having cleared up the mystery, and Ahab rose to get a coal from the fire for his pipe. Taking two or three puffs, he said:

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## Other Tales

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"Well, Minister ought to do little prayin' for himself too, because him love victuals too much, an' dat is a sin as well as t'iefin'."

The two women looked knowingly at each other and as the pennkeeper turned to leave the kitchen, Sarah called after him, "Anyhow, w'en de Debbil sarvin' out de boilin' lead, him won't pass de one dat teckin' dem same bread-fruit." Then she left her seat and going over to Jemima, put her hand impressively on the younger woman's shoulder, saying solemnly, "Jemima, believe me, is not a soul else but Ahab doin' it."

At midnight when everything grows quiet in the tropics and "the weary world lies sleeping," Frau von Helmsdorf's dreams were rudely broken by the sound of laughter so wild and unnatural that she trembled with fright for some seconds until she saw the cause of her alarm in her husband who was sitting up in bed, pointing wildly with his finger into the surrounding darkness, and laughing with fierce joy.

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## Forbidden Fruit

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"Fritz! Fritz! What is it? Are you crazy?"

Her voice seemed to break the spell, for his outstretched hand dropped and he sank wearily back to his pillow, then asked in a sleepy tone:

"What is it, Frau?"

"Ach! Fritz, mein Mann, I thought you had gone crazy. What made you do it, Fritz, are you ill?"

"No, no, Frau, I am not ill, but I had a vision. In my dreams I saw the robber of my bread-fruit tree taken in a trap at the root of it. I laughed to see the sinner thus caught in his sin."

"Fritz, forget not who says, 'vengeance is mine,' and always, so far, you have set these poor blacks the example of charity to all men. Vex thyself not with anger but pray for thine enemy that he be turned from his evil doings."

"I do that also, Emma, but a little judicious punishment here might save him from the wrath to come."

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## Other Tales

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Frau von Helmsdorf at first only shook her head in reply. She was not strong in argument but seldom changed her mind. After a full minute of silence she remarked:

"Take care, mein Mann, lest you punish yourself worse than him, if you would persist."

At breakfast next morning, the missionary announced his intention of going to the Bay, or nearest sea-port town, about fourteen miles away, to make some necessary purchases, and contrary to his usual custom did not ask his wife to accompany him. That evening he returned laden with an assortment of merchandise, and Ahab came forward to take Karl and the gig round to the stables, his master cautioning him to look well to the horse's feet as one of them seemed lame.

"It is a great bother, Ahab, for I must go to the Bay again on Monday."

Ahab stooped to examine the hurt.

"Karl never can go dat journey on Monday,

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## Forbidden Fruit

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sah. Him foot cut bad," he said when he had seen the nature of the wound.

Von Helmsdorf frowned and stamped his foot impatiently.

"Look here, Ahab, I simply *must* go to the Bay on Monday; cannot you fix him up so that he can take the journey slowly?"

"Can't do it, Minister. De cut deep an' if you drive dat horse before two week, him will lame for de res' of him life. But if Minister want to go to de Bay bad fashion, me can borrow one horse, or failin' horse itself, one mule?"

"All right, Karl can rest for a month if you like."

"Very good, Minister," and Ahab led away the lame animal.

Sunday morning Ahab went on his borrowing expedition and the first call he made was at the blacksmith's shop which stood about a mile down the road.

"Marnin,' Cousin Benny," he said putting his head in at the door.

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## Other Tales

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"Marnin,' Cousin, but how come it dat you get 'way so soon dis Sabbat'?" returned the blacksmith.

Ahab explained the situation voluminously and concluded with, "So I come dis marnin' to ask you if you can len' me you' wall-eye mare for de trip? Minister will pay you dollar for it."

"Me good Cousin Ahab, if him offer me poun' de mare doan able; she lie down onder de cotton tree now wid Johncrow up at de tree top keepin' watch for her las' breat'."

"De poor brute! Well, I mus' go an' see if any of dem todder one got a beas' to len'."

"I say, Ahab, w'at Minister goin' to do wid de iron somet'ing him gettin' meck at de Bay? Him give me wife broder order for one kind of trap, an' have it ready for Monday, so mus' be dat teckin' him to de Bay so soon again."

"Iron trap? Me doan hear not'ing 'bout dat. Minister got 'nough trap already to

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## Forbidden Fruit

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ketch all de rat an' mongoose dat ever walk."

"Well, from w'at me wife broder say, dis too big for mongoose or rat. W'en him did ask Minister w'at de use of it, Minister say, to ketch a kin' of rat got only two foot, an' me nebber hear of two foot rat before."

A light broke in on Ahab's mind. He was silent for awhile then said:

"Neider me, me frien', but anyhow I mus' go, so day-day."

"Day-day," returned Benny, and Ahab continued his quest.

From Joe Miller he got the loan of a mule, and on Monday the minister went again to the Bay.

That evening von Helmsdorf set his trap at the root of his bread-fruit tree and for many days waited expectantly, but the thief came no more and at last the good missionary himself forgot all about the trap.

It happened that one day as he was riding on the road near the tree, he looked up and

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## Other Tales

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saw, half hidden by leaves, a beautiful bread-fruit and the good man's mouth watered at the sight.

Dismounting, he threw the reins on Karl's neck and taking off his coat, prepared to climb if his bulk would permit. Now the grass had grown over the trap and von Helmsdorf thought of nothing else but the handsome green fruit hanging high above his head. Without warning, the trap snapped its iron jaws and von Helmsdorf was a prisoner.

Consternation overcame him for awhile, then stooping he cleared away the grass with his hands and tried in vain to open the strong iron spring, but his instructions had been minute and careful and the backsmith had been exact, so there was nothing for him but to shout for help and thank his stars that he had mercifully ordered the trap to be made without sharp teeth; though in closing, it sprung a peculiar catch which made the opening almost impossible to any one caught in the toothless jaws.



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## Forbidden Fruit

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Ahab, hearing the cries, ran to the spot and the good man, overjoyed at the prospect of speedy deliverance, cried out as he saw the approaching figure:

"Oh! my friend, my friend, help me to escape from this fiend. Ahab, Ahab, in the wickedness of my heart I set a trap for a thief and am fallen into the midst thereof myself!"

"My Fader! Minister, w'at do you? Is it duppy [ghost] holin' you foot, sah?" said Ahab, feigning ignorance of his master's trouble.

"No! no! Ahab, an invention of the Evil One has me in its clutches. I saw this thing in a dream and mistook it for inspiration from above, so I hardened my heart and thought to see my enemy where I stand to-day. But the veil has fallen from my eyes and I know now the enemy I must seek to take prisoner is myself. I love too much the things of the table and they have led me to forsake the way of mercy to sinners. But tear open the bands of iron that encompass my leg for I am

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## Other Tales

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not so young as once I was and the pain is not a little."

So Ahab took a large stone and forced it into the trap, thereby enabling the missionary to withdraw his foot, and exclaimed incautiously as he examined the instrument of torture:

"Massey! but dis strong 'nough to hold de bull of Bashan; I glad I did teck care to keep away from dis tree."

"*y*ou knew it was there then! Aha! Ahab, then *you* stole my bread-fruit."

Confounded by the rapidity of the inference and the tone of certainty, Ahab did not even attempt denial but fell on his knees.

"Oh! Massa Parson, I 'm shame of myself. It is a great sin to t'ief from you an' I is de chiefes' among sinner."

"What could have tempted you, Ahab, to do such a wicked thing?"

"De bread-fruit, Massa, de green temptation, sah. Lard, I love de bread-fruit jus' de same as you does you'self, sah."

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## Forbidden Fruit

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The minister looked down at him in a dazed way. He felt accused of his own familiar sin; then a benign expression came over his kind face and he said:

"You do, Ahab? I can understand the case then, but beware of stealing, my son. And as it is my duty to remove temptation from the weak, just climb the tree and fetch me down that bread-fruit."

But the good man gave that specimen of "green temptation" to a neighbour and has never been known to eat of bread-fruit since nor indulge too freely in fried plantain. He is much thinner, stronger, and more active than he was ten years ago and often the good Frau thinks that his vision did not come from below after all for the trap *did* catch the thief undoubtedly.

# Methuselah's Courtship

## A Tale of the West Indies

"**H**I! Grannie, meck me help you, ehey?"  
"All right, buoy, I will t'ank you, for the jackass more dan me. Shove him behin' w'ile I haul him by de rope. Custos' buggy comin' an' de road dat narrer I 'fraid de banana dem going to mash up."

At that the old woman ran to the donkey's head, and made as much haste up the steep bank as her withered limbs would allow, coaxing the stubborn animal with a sharp smacking noise from her lips, while Son-son pushed valiantly from behind. The donkey, yielding to double persuasion, ran up the bank, and Son-son deftly snatched from the topmost bunch two of the largest and ripest bananas.

When the passing carriage had vanished round a bend in the road, the old woman led

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## Methuselah's Courtship

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her beast down again and would have proceeded on her way, but Son-son, touching his cap, said meekly:

"Den, Grannie, you not goin' to give me one so-so banana for me trouble? De jackass did w'ell heavy, you know, ma'm."

"You pick'ney nebber want to do not'ing widouten pay," grumbled grannie. Then she searched among her bananas for the smallest and greenest of them, and, discovering the theft, turned upon the boy with the end of the rope and a shower of abuse. He darted down the road and at a safe distance stood mocking and waving the fruit at the irate old woman, who, knowing pursuit would be useless, gave to the donkey the blows she had meant for the boy, and disappeared with her beast round the corner after the Custos' buggy.

Son-son peeled a banana, and his mouth was just opening for the first bite when a voice from behind said:

"Where you get dem?"

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## Other Tales

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The boy turned his head, to see a handsome black girl of about twenty balancing on her head a round basket of yams.

Ax me no question an' I won't tell you no lie," he replied snubbingly, and continued on his way. She followed him.

"I just ax for fun, me buoy, for I well know we 're dem come from."

"W'ere den, since you is obeah woman an' know w'at nobody tell you?"

"Out of Grannie Maria creel. Me jus' pass her on de road an' she strong 'pon cussin' you for a t'ief!"

Son-son threw his head back.

"Laugh, me buoy, laugh! You nebber hear dem say, 'w'en chicken merry, hawk is neez'?"

"W'at you mean?" he asked sharply, and the girl answered:

"Well! I know dem people dat got de spirit is tip-top 'pon de tamarin' switch, for my fader did have it one time, an' I see Missa Methuselah at de las' revival hump'n'

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## Methuselah's Courtship

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up himself like puss swaller fish-bone, an' groanin', an' dem say is the spirit him got."

"Wilse Methuselah don't for me fader, w'at me care how much 'spirit' him got? You too fool, Becky!"

"But me tell you say him goin' be you' fader-in-law; an' dat worse agen! Me see him, 's bery marnin' 'pon him mule, wid him burn pan 'pon him head, an' him long tail coat, an' him would n' wear dat week day if 'e did n't courtin'! Dem say is you' moder 'e gone see. An' min' you, Son-son, big tan 'in' tree grow at him door mouth!"

Becky watched with delight the cloud which gathered on the boy's face, and she laughed aloud when he shook his fist and said:

"Lard! If I ever catch him courtin' my moder I beat him till him mash up fine!"

Son-son fairly boiled with indignation, and Becky, feeling that her mission had been accomplished, said gaily:

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## Other Tales

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"Good-by, me buoy! I sorry for you from me heart!" and turned up a narrow pathway.

He deigned no answer, but walked on, switching viciously at the wild flowers along his path. At his mother's gate Francella met him, her face wreathed in smiles, and brimming over with news. A mule was hitched to a tree in the yard, and before the little girl had time to speak, her brother demanded sternly:

"Who for dat mule?"

"Is Missa Methuselah mule. Him inside the house with ma. Dem courtin', Son-son!" she added excitedly.

"Courtin'! Dat ole lightnin' fool some-t'ing t'ink say ma goin' married him?"

"Yes! she jus' finish tell him so now! Look here, Son-son, you ought to see de gran' flourishin' bow him meck to ma w'en him come in fus'. Den him say, 'Mistress Rachel, I come to meck a supposition to you, ma'm.' Ma, she says, 'Wat is dat, Mistah Methuselah?' jes' like she did n't know. Den him



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## Methuselah's Courtship

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knock him hand 'pon him shirt front, bram! an' say, 'Mistress Rachel, dis heart is onderneath you foot. Will you teck me for better an' for worse, ma'm?' Ma, she begin to laugh, an' twis' her neck like chicken got staggers, den Missa Methuselah meck to come up to her, an' him dat hurry him nebber see Maria till him mash off de t'ing five toe. Look here, Son-son, de poor puss mos' spit himself to death, as him meck for de door 'pon de tree foot leffen to him. I dat frighten I has to run out an' did n't see de endin' of it."

"Wha' dem doin' now?" inquired her brother, whose frown had relaxed at the recital of Maria's woes.

"I dunno, but I goin' look t'roo de wattlin', an' see if I can see anyt'ing."

"I comin' wid you!"

The two little imps stole round to the back of the thatched cottage, where they knew that a hole in the wall of interlaced laths would afford opportunity for observation. There was a struggle to be first at the hole,

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## Other Tales

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and of course Son-son won. He took off the straw brim which did duty as a hat and applied one eye to the hole. The happy pair were sitting on a bench against the opposite wall, Methuselah's puny shape and deformity making strange contrast to the woman's ample development. Suddenly he kissed her, and she returned the salute with a robust fervour which made Son-son exclaim:

"Lard! Francella, you dear dat? Dat is 'nough to meck the cluckin' lizard in de thatchin' trimble!" Hardly had the words been spoken when a scream from within made him return his eye hastily to the hole. His mother stood upon the bench, horror-stricken, her skirts gathered round her, and her gallant lover armed with a broom was peering on the ground with his shortsighted eyes for the disturber of his bliss.

"W'at me did tell you?" the boy demanded excitedly of his sister, and rushed round to the door shouting, "Stop, Missa Methuselah! Stop, sah! I will kill him for you!"

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## Methuselah's Courtship

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Francella followed, as she always did when her brother led, though in truth she knew nothing of what had happened. On the floor lay a large lizard, which, stupefied by its fall, was turning rapidly from grey to brown. Snatching the broom from Methuselah's hand, Son-son lifted the stick high in the air, and was about to demolish the intruding reptile at a blow, but the cat's breakfast had been forgotten that morning, and she, recognising a chance of filling the void, darted softly forward, then out of the door with the prize dangling from her mouth. Quick as a flash the boy was after her, but his mother stopped him, saying:

"Look here, buoy, lef' dat puss alo an' go bring wood to cook the dinner."

"I did jes' teck aim for the middle of the lizard backbone, an' if Maria did n' come I would have nail him to de floor! Puss is de t'iefin'es' t'ing in de worl'!" muttered Son-son still scowling after the disappearing cat. Then he went off to do his mother's

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## Other Tales

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bidding, Francella following at a respectful distance.

When they were once more alone, Rachel said to her affianced husband:

"I got somet'ing to show you, but you musn' tell nobody. You hear?"

He promised, and she stepped outside for a moment, returning with a small rustic ladder, which she placed firmly against the wattled wall, and clambering up drew from amid the thatch of the roof a wooden money box. This she showed to Methuselah, saying:

"I got ten pound in dis box, an' I goin' spen' some of it on de dress for de weddin'."

"Ten poun'!" he exclaimed, with wide eyes of astonishment; "you is a rich woman, Rachel."

She put the box carefully in its hiding-place, and came down the ladder.

"Now, Methuselah, you is de only one know 'bout dat money, so you keep you mout' shet, or it might be t'iefin' from me."

"Nebber you fear, Rachel, my love; I will

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## Methuselah's Courtship

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let my communication be yea, yea, nay, nay.  
Trus' me for dat."

"De pick'ney mus' be come wid de wood  
by this time, so I beg you put back de ladder  
'gainst de fowl house, an' I will go boil little  
victuals for you."

As the little knock-kneed man got outside  
the door with his burden, Son-son, who had  
been an unseen observer of the whole pro-  
ceeding, called out to him:

"Hi! Missa Methuselah, w'at you been  
doin' wid ladder in de house? Me did t'ink  
dat you' foot too twis' to climb dat."

"Buoy," he replied, in a solemnly reproach-  
ful voice, "dere is no bear in dis lan', t'ank  
God! But dere is odder wil' t'ings just as  
bad, an' if you ever go to Sunday-school you  
ought to know w'at happen dem dat mock  
at de afflicted of de Lord."

Rachel, coming out of the house, heard the  
last words, and asked:

"Wha' him saying, Methuselah?"

"Rachel, I am sorry to say your son

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## Other Tales

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standet' in great need of chastisement. He is a mocker, ma'm."

"Den I goin' give it to him," replied the mother, making a dive at Son-son, who, always on the alert for such emergencies, made good his escape. "Nebber min', me buoy! W'en you' clothes come off to-night is de time! Shurance, pick'ney," a threat which she made good in a way that Son-son did not soon forget, and the wales on his little body served to keep strong his desire for revenge until the opportunity came to gratify it. This happened one market day when Rachel went off to the nearest town, taking Francella with her, Son-son being left to take care of the house. Then the old, time-worn adage concerning idle hands and mischief received confirmation once again.

With nothing to do until time to cook his mid-day meal, the boy lay under the jack-fruit tree, and fell fast asleep. He was awakened by the noisy cackling of a hen who was slowly hopping down the ladder of the fowl-

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## Methuselah's Courtship

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house. Up he jumped, scaring the hen until she forgot her dignity and flew screaming away to join the other members of Rachel's feathered flock, while he ran nimbly up the ladder, and as nimbly down again with a big brown egg in his hands. At the foot of the ladder a sudden thought struck him; he put his finger in his mouth, and hung his head for a moment, then nodded as if his decision pleased him. Taking the ladder into the house, he proceeded to investigate the walls and roof. At the point where his mother's money box lay hidden he noticed that the thatch had been disturbed, and with a grin of delighted expectation he put the ladder into position, and running up it was soon in possession of Rachel's treasure. He shook the box, then tried to get his finger through the opening, and, failing, put the box into his pocket, and scrambling down carried the ladder back to the fowl-house, and returned himself to the shade of the jack-fruit tree, where, with the aid of a penknife, the lid was

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## Other Tales

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soon removed from the box, and Son-son gazed at the golden coins with much curiosity. That they were money he knew, but of their value, or where they might be changed, he was ignorant; besides, he had no immediate use for them, beyond the feeling of anger against her lover their loss would cause his mother. So, digging a deep hole under shelter of a low-growing rose-bush, and nailing back the lid of the box, he buried his treasure as he knew was customary with the Spanish buccaneers. Then he built a fire of brambles, cooked his fish and cocoa thereon, and, having eaten them, stretched himself once more under his favourite tree to yawn away the time till his mother's return.

Rachel arrived in high spirits, having sold her provisions to such good advantage that the wedding gown had been purchased without breaking in on her golden store. That evening when Methuselah came to pay his usual visit, she displayed to his admiring eyes a piece of white silk gaily flowered, explain-



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## Methuselah's Courtship

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ing that the ten pounds was still intact, and would now serve to pay for an addition to her house, in which they would live after marriage, it being already a good deal larger than her fiancé's bachelor residence.

"An' I been t'inkin', Methuselah," said she, "dat de bes' t'ing to do wid dat money, meanw'ile, is to put it in de bank. W'at you say to dat? I t'ink I will jus' get it down now w'ile you is here to hold de ladder for me."

Glancing at the two children, who were sound asleep in a corner of the room, and without waiting for Methuselah's expression of opinion, she went out to get the ladder. As before, he held it in place while she mounted and searched among the thatch, her face expressing more and more bewilderment when her treasure was not forthcoming. When the truth dawned upon her, she slid down the ladder, and seized the little shrunken body at the foot of it in her strong arms.

What followed Methuselah could never

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## Other Tales

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rightly recall until he found himself mounted on his mule, and riding for dear life out of the yard. At the gate something whizzed past his head and startled his mule, which broke into a wild gallop, landing Methuselah on the top of his head in a roadside drain. Here he lay for a while stunned by the fall, and it was midnight before he lifted the latch of his little cottage door, and threw himself, all battered and faint, upon his bed. The mule had found his way home sooner, and was quietly cropping the short grass around the hut, without one qualm of conscience to disturb his repast.

Not long after this an uncle of Methuselah's died, leaving him what, in the eyes of his black friends, seemed a large fortune, and then Rachel began to repent of her hasty judgment.

"Even if him did teck de money it would n' matter, for him got more dan dat now himself, an' him so weak I could have manage him all right," she reflected. "Fran-

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## Methuselah's Courtship

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cella," said she, to the little girl, "get de hoe; I goin' dig up dat roses-bush; it grow too big, an' goin' to dead anyway."

Francella obeyed, and Rachel was soon working away at the root of the despised rose-bush, turning up great clods of earth at every blow, which it was Francella's delight to break open in the hopes of finding therein some wriggling insect. Soon she gave a scream of delight, and Rachel turned, to see her lost money box in the little girl's hand.

"W're you fin' dat?" she asked sharply.

"In the hole you diggin', Ma. It soun' like money in it, too," Francella exclaimed excitedly, jumping up and down.

Rachel threw down her hoe and with a pair of scissors she had about her person took off the lid of the box. There lay her ten golden sovereigns, bright and safe. She was stupefied for a moment, then muttered, "Poor Methuselah did n't t'ief it after all. Mus' had been duppy do dis ting."

That afternoon she donned her Sunday

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## Other Tales

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dress, and went to "meetin'." Methuselah had taken more violently than ever to religion since his unhappy love affair, and had become a leader in the revivalist movement, and it was to the little meeting-house where he preached that she now went, taking both children with her. As she reached the door it was thrown violently open, and a wedding party streamed out. At its head walked Methuselah with Becky, clad in bridal array, leaning on his arm, and Rachel knew she had come too late. As the couple passed, Son-son called out:

"Hi! Becky, you mus' be forgot dat big tamarin' tree grow at him door mouth, an' dem dat got de spirit is tip-top 'pon de switch."

Becky tossed her head, and the company giggled, but Methuselah turned upon the mother and son a look of burning hate.

"Scarlet woman of Babylon," he said aloud, "sit no longer by the wayside, but go home, and mete out to the young viper, thy son, his just punishment."

## “Busha” Chicken

**B**LACK RACHEL was down at the river washing clothes. She had no preconceived notions of economy, and the fact that her soap suds floated away as fast as they were formed, did not trouble her generous mind. There she stood in the little silvery stream, her skirts tucked up above her knees, a large flat stone for a washboard, and a corn cob as her right-hand assistant in the battle for cleanliness.

Her two ebony chips, Son-son and Francella, were busy catching ticky-tickies (minnows) in a tin can with a wire handle.

“My Fader! Son-son, look 'pon dat crayfish over dere—see! jus' onder dat rockstone! Him big as any barracoota!”

“Ahey! a so for true, Francey. Gosh!

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## Other Tales

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him big sah! I g' 'r' try to ketch him wid one grass straw."

Off he ran, soon returning with the longest straw to be found. Making a noose with the pliable end, he crept slowly into the stream until so near his victim that he dared not move another step, then softly dipped the loop beneath the surface of the water and pushed it cautiously under the unsuspecting crustacean's tail. A sudden jerk threw his captive to the bank, landing it almost on top of Francella, who, with a yell, flew for her life.

"Francella—you is de foolishes' gal I ebber see from I born! Wha' you t'ink de crayfish would do you?"

"Lard! Son-son, teck care him run him mout' inna you!"

"Chow! watch me grab him!" returned her brother scornfully.

"Hi, Lard! Lard! but I nebber did know say dem somet'ing was dat venomous!" he cried dropping it in hot haste, for in his anx-

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## "Busha" Chicken

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iety to show his superior skill to Francella, he had managed to run the long jaw-like protuberance of the crawfish into his hand, where it snapped off.

"What is de matter wid you, buoy?" called his mother as she stepped out of the water to spread her clothes on the penguin fence close by.

"Crayfish jam him mout' in me han' an it bruck off in dere."

"Meck me see," said Rachel, taking his hand from which the blood trickled slowly.

"Bery well! you nebber will lissen w'en you fader tell you say is 'Softly—softly ketch monkey quickes',' an' now you goin' dead of lockjaw!"

She delivered the sentence as though something she had long looked for had happened, and she did not regret it in the least. A duet of wails broke from the children.

"Stop you bawlin' an' go 'long to see if Docta' in de bilin' house an' get him to teck

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## Other Tales

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it out for you. Run! meck haste—for if it get mix wid you' blood, you done for!"

Off they started, Francella's little plaits of crimped hair standing out stiffer than ever from her head, while her anxious brown eyes kept a steady watch on her brother's face—Son-son feeling anxious as to "Doctor's" method of removal, but, from more mature experience, putting less faith in his mother's prophetic gift.

After they had walked awhile in silence, Francella said timidly:

"Son-son?"

"Eyeh?"

"Is you' jaw gettin' stiff yet?"

"Yes."

"Which part Son-son?"

"Jus' dong at de tongue root."

"Massey! you t'ink you goin' dead?"

"Yes—dis bery minute."

Suiting the action to the word, the young son of Ham fell over on his back, his teeth



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## "Busha" Chicken

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set and grinning, his eyes rolling wildly, and a gurgling in his throat.

Francella stood by wringing her hands, the great tears rolling down her little black face, and between sobs calling to her dearly loved brother not to die. But he appeared not to hear or heed, and after a struggle or two, lay quite still.

This was too much for Francella, who, thinking her brother dead, took to her heels shouting as she ran, "Help, oh! help; oh!" Fear had driven love from out her little African heart.

"Stop, you little fool you! Ma will soon hear you an' den you know dat tamarin' switch goin' to play 'pon we back!"

"Is you betta, Son-son?" Francella asked, much relieved at the sudden change.

"Chow! it was fun me was meckin', gal, me did n't hab no lockjaw, me jus' form sick to frighten you. Come, meck we set one springe an' try ketch one bud for we dinner.

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## Other Tales

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Peadove well sweet w'en dem roas', you know!"

The art of springe making and setting was something in which much practice had made these two perfect, so a young shoot was soon cut from a tree, and pieces of string fished out of Son-son's pocket full of miscellanies and tied to one end of the sapling. They drove the other end firmly into the ground, then bent it bow-shaped until the string, formed into a noose, rested on the grass, where a forked stick kept it in position. A few bullet tree berries laid within the noose, completed the merciless trap.

Then the little niggers retired behind the big bullet tree and waited for their victim. Nor had they long to wait.

"Francella, you see him?" whispered Son-son hoarsely.

"Yes, yes! I see him, but w'at it. Son-son; dat too big for peadove?"

"Stop little," said her brother as he crept out a bit to get a better view of the bird.

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## "Busha" Chicken

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Then as he slowly drew himself back again,  
"No—is not peadove, is partridge—see  
how him red?"

"But me did hear pa say dat mongoose  
nyam [eat] off all de partridge an' none don't  
lef'?"

"Me carn be help for dat, me know say  
dat bud is partridge. Ahey! got him!" he  
shouted as the springe flew up, carrying with  
it the unwary bird.

Both children rushed up in time to see  
their victim fall to the ground again, where  
it remained motionless, the weight of its  
body keeping the sapling bent. Seeing it  
was dead, they quickly took the noose from  
round its broken neck, then consternation  
seized the pair.

"Francella! is one of Busha [overseer's]  
chicken!"

Francella began to cry.

"Son-son, I tell you say dat bud was n't  
partridge. I tell you say mongoose nyam off  
all de partridge an' you would n' believe me,

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## Other Tales

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an' now Busha goin' to beat we w'en him fin' out."

"Doan fret for dat! Busha will neber know dat it not mongoose eat him chicken. It nice an' fat, Francey, an' goin' to meck you lick you' mout' w'en it stew. But min' now an' hol' you tongue—you hear?"

"I will shet me mout', but I 'fraid for Busha, him so love to beat pick'ney [children]. Son-son hide it onder dat tumble dong tree dere, an' w'en we comin' back we will get it agen."

"Eh! eh! de gal 'tupid sah! you forget I jis' done call mongoose name eno? I 'se jus' goin' to put dis here red fowl in de top of me hat an' not a soul will eber know say I got chicken 'pon me head." He drew off his cone-shaped felt hat and doubling up the still limp chicken in it, replaced it on his head, and revolving on one foot before his sister, said triumphantly:

"Dere! you see any of it, Francey?"

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## "Busha" Chicken

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"No—but you' hat look bery tall, an' if it was to drop off——"

"Oh, chow! come on an' lef' me to look after dat."

The excitement over, Son-son remembered his sore hand, and they walked very fast until they reached the trash yard of the sugar estate where "Doctor" was bookkeeper. A mixed gang were lazily raking up the cane trash into heaps, preparatory to storing it away under cover, to be used as fuel later on. As the children came in sight, a young lad called out to them:

"Hi! Cousin, w'at you come for?"

"Come for beg Docta teck somet'ing out of me han'."

"Wha' it—logwood prickle?"

"Nebber—crayfish mout'."

"Lard, buoy! him goin' cut to de bone for dat! Show me de han' eno." Then as he examined it, "It gone dong fur enough. Mus' hab been a able crayfish for do dat—

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## Other Tales

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it goin' hurt you for teck out, sonny, better meck I come wid you."

"All right, come on if you like."

Looking round to see if the gang driver was out of sight and finding he was, Reuben dropped his rake and went with the children to the door of the boiling house. Here Son-son stopped.

"Come on! wha' you stoppin' for?" asked Reuben, all haste to see the sport.

"Chow, man! I 'fraid Docta' goin' use him long knife 'pon me!"

"But dere 's a buoy coward! Den you goin' stan' here an' meck de crayfish p'isin get inna you blood? You mus' be want to dead!"

"Nebber—me will go, but Francey teck me hat so hol' it tight, you hear? I might lost it de way I goin' jump w'en de cole steel touch me."

With both hands he carefully took his hat off his head, and bringing the two brims close together to hide the chicken, he handed it to

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## "Busha" Chicken

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his sister. Poor little Francey! if she had been given a dynamite bomb to embrace, she could not have looked more scared. She took the precious hat very cautiously, and Reuben, seeing something was up, asked:

"W'at you got in dere, Francella?"

"Peadove," was the prompt reply.

"How you ketch him?" he went on.

"Springe," said the little girl shortly.

"Meck me see him?"

"No! Parson say somebody mus'n want w'at nodder somebody got, an' if I show you dis bud, I will temp' you, den de Debbil goin' get me w'en I dead."

"De gal convince!" said Reuben, and mounted the rickety stairs without any more questions.

They found "Docta'" in a narrow passage alongside the liquor vats, and Reuben lost no time in telling him Son-son's errand.

"Let me see your hand, Son-son."

"Yes, sah," said the lad, and opened his palm for inspection.

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## Other Tales

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"Yes—it's gone down deep, and I shall have to cut to get it out."

"Oh, Lard! no, sah! me will meck it stop so till to-morrow, Docta'!"

"Oh, no! you 'd better have it out now or it may fester in there."

"Chow! Son-son, you don' hab as much heart as a cockroach! Doctor, you want me to hol' de buoy for you, sah? Ehey, sah?"

"Yes—hold him."

Son-son waited for nothing more, but turned and ran down the passage at the top of his speed, Reuben in hot pursuit. The race was not a fair one, and very soon the small boy was writhing in the strong grip of his big friend, who carried him bodily up to where "Doctor" stood smiling—he understood the negro nature thoroughly.

"Now, Reuben," he said, "you hold out his arm so—and don't let him move. Francella, give me that knife on the window sill there. Now, Son-son, if you don't open your hand this minute, I will cut your fingers off!"



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## " Busha " Chicken

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Son-son opened his hand, shut his eyes tight, and long before the knife touched him, was yelling at the top of his voice, while Reuben, grinning with delight, held him as in a vise.

"There! stop your bawling, the thing is out and hardly a drop of blood spilt. Shame of yourself! why Francella would n't cry to have her hand cut, would you, Francey?"

"No, sah!" said the little girl, putting her finger in her mouth and wriggling herself like a fat snake.

"Come, then, let me see if you have n't something that wants cutting out."

Francella only grinned and put both her hands behind her back, chicken and hat included.

"Reuben, catch that girl, and bring her to me," "Doctor" called, and Reuben, nothing loath, made a dive at Francella, who, in trying to dodge him, tumbled backwards into a vat of half cured liquor.

Immediately the crowd that had peeped

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## Other Tales

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at Son-son's agony through doors, windows, and cracks in the partition wall, were on the spot, exclaiming, directing and getting in the way generally, while "Doctor," the only one capable of useful action, was trying to fish the poor little thing out of her slimy bath. At last he got a good hold on her frock and dragged her to the edge, where a dozen swarthy hands were ready to help take her out, and lay her down, for the child was suffocating and only half conscious.

"Get out of the way there, you black devils!" cried the bookkeeper as he dropped on his knees beside Francella, and with his handkerchief wiped from her nose, mouth, and eyes, the thick scum that covered them. He tore open the throat of her poor cotton frock and putting his hand over her heart, satisfied himself that she was not in much danger, in fact more frightened than hurt.

"Docta,' de pick'ney [child] dead, sah?" asked an old woman, anxiously.

"No."

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## "Busha" Chicken

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"But, Docta!"

"Well?"

"You don't t'ink say him blood goin' to congeal so meck martification set in, sah?"

"Go 'bout your business and don't bother me with your nonsense."

"Me no talkin' nonsense! you bockra [white people] nebber t'ink say neager know anyt'ing but w'en de pick'ney dead you will be sorry you would n't lissen to w'at a' ole 'oman got to say 'pon dese t'ings."

Francella suddenly sat up, which stopped the old woman's chatter and startled the crowd around her. She rubbed her eyes and gazed about wildly, then asked:

"Whey me peadeve?"

Son-son had forgotten the chicken, so taken up was he with his sister's unhappy plight, but at her question he jumped as if he had been shot and peered into the vat.

Reuben had heard the question, too, and ran for one of the big ladles used in cooling the liquor. Now was his chance of seeing

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## Other Tales

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that mysterious peadove, and he meant to use it. Returning he went over to "Doctor," and said:

"Sah! dem want you at de centrifigle, sah!"

Doctor had hardly disappeared through the door when the wily Reuben dipped his ladle into the vat and scraped all around most carefully.

"W'at you t'ink you lookin' for, Reuben?" asked Son-son angrily.

"Dat 's w'at I doan know meself!" he replied with a wicked grin, as the ladle scooped harder than ever. "You sure is peadove did into dat hat?"

"Yes, I sure, sure!"

"Sartin?"

"Sartin as I livin'!"

"Den look out, for I got him now," and the ladle came slowly up one side of the vat. As soon as it appeared at the top, Son-son stooped to grasp it, but Reuben quickly pulled it toward himself and seizing the un-

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## "Busha" Chicken

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fortunate chicken by its legs, held it high in the air.

"Give it to me, Reuben, give it to me, I tell you!"

But Reuben was deaf. Taking it in both hands he made a careful examination of his prize.

"Well!" he said at last, "dis is de firs' time since I see peadove wid comb 'pon dem head, an' big so! Son-son, you is a liard!"

"Gie me me bud I tell you, Reuben, else I tell Docta 'pon you."

Reuben laughed. "Tell him den! Is don't me bruck de fowl neck, so w'at me care? I t'ink I will jus' go ask Docta if him ebber see dis here breed of peadove before—him know all 'bout insec' an' such like t'ings."

"You would n' fit! you would n' fit go show dat t'ing to Docta," Son-son declared emphatically.

"Francella," said Reuben, going over to the little girl, "Francella, is dis for you?"

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## Other Tales

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"No," said Francella hesitatingly, "doan for me."

"Now, Son-son, you hear Francella say dis is not for her bud, so you better teck de ladle an' look agen, perhaps you will fin' de peadove after all! De chicken I fine doan get owner, so I got a right to keep it for me-self! Good-by, me buoy; I t'ank de Lord dat me ma nebber teach me for set trap an' ketch t'ings dat doan belong to meself!"

With which pious thanksgiving, he vanished down the steps and left Son-son staring after him, stupefied. On recovering he turned to his sister, and in tones of the deepest conviction said:

"Francella, I did tell you already dat you is de foolishes' gal I ebber see since I barn—but Lard, I did n't know it was so truth till now!"

Poor little nigger! she had done her best and this was her reward—at least, some of it, for her mother and the tamarind switch did their part when she got home.

# How Puss Come to Ketch Rat

(An Anancy Story)

ONE day Puss an' Rat harness dem horse in dem buggy an' start 'way to drive out. W'en dem go little way, dem come to one house an' Rat tell Puss say him mus' wait little for him because him want to go in de house, but him will soon come out again. So Rat get out of de buggy an' go in de house an' into de kitchen an' dere him see one pot wid rice burn at de bottom an' him get into de pot an' begin to scrape, scrape until de pot turn over on him an' cover him up, den him begin to sing an' Puss outside hear de singin' an' go into de house to look for Rat. Puss hear de scrape, scrape onder de pot an'

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## Other Tales

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as him lif' it up an' see Rat onderneat' him  
know dat Rat did deceive him an' him ketch  
Rat an' pop him neck, an' from dat time  
Puss always ketch Rat.



## Anancy and Tiger

(How Tiger Come to Live in de Bush)

**I**N de long before time, Anancy an' Tiger was both courtin' de same young lady an' dem was very jealous of each odder, so one day Anancy him go to de young lady house, an' him say, "You know Bra' Tiger is not 'ing else dan me fader ole ridin' horse."

De young lady was vex' an' say she doan believe him, so Anancy say, "I will prove it to you."

De nex' time Tiger come to see her she say, "Go 'way wid you, you is a shurance [impertinent] man to come courtin' bockra [white] lady w'en you know you is not 'ing dut a ole ridin' horse."

Den Tiger bawl out say, "I know who tell you dat, is not a soul 'ceptin' dat liard An-

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## Other Tales

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ancy an' I will jus' go to him house now an' meck him come an' tell you himself dat it is a lie."

An' Tiger go straight to Anancy house but Anancy see him comin' t'roo de winda an' Anancy know well w'at bring Tiger to him house dis time of day so Anancy meck haste an' get into de bed an' tie up him head wid handkerchief, an' as Bra' Tiger bounce into de room, Anancy put him han' to him head an' say:

"Oh! do me good Tiger, doan meck noise for I sick unto deat'."

Bra' Tiger say, "Sick or not sick, Bra' Anancy, you have to come wid me now an' tell Miss Rose dat you is a liard w'en you call me you' fader ole ridin' horse."

"Oh! Bra', how me to come w'en me doan able to walk?"

"You has to come, Anancy, even if I has to carry you, you mus' come."

"Well, Bra', if you will carry me I will try an' come but I very sick." An' Anancy

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## Anancy and Tiger

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meck a awful groan, but Tiger doan care, an' tell Anancy to get 'pon him back, an' Anancy get up but form [pretend] say him did n' able to hold on an' tumble down 'pon de bed again. Den Tiger say, "Well, Anancy, I see dat you is well sick in truth but you mus' come wid me all de same."

Den Anancy say, "Well, Bra', if you will walk 'pon you' four foot perhaps I could hold on better, an' I has a little saddle here, if you meck I put de saddle 'pon you' back, perhaps I could manage to hold on."

Tiger say, "Very well, Anancy," an' him go down 'pon him four foot an' 'low Anancy to put de saddle 'pon him back, an' dem start off again but dem jus' gone one step an' Anancy tumble off Bra' Tiger back an' say him carn hold on widouten bridle to help him. So Tiger 'low Anancy to put bridle 'pon him head an' bit into him mout' an' dem start off again, but dem doan gone far w'en Anancy begin to holler say, "Oh! Bra' Tiger, I beg you doan go so fas' else I

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## Other Tales

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will dead. Do me good, Bra', give me one little spur so I can jus' touch you w'en you goin' too fas'." An' Tiger give Anancy de spur an' dem go long little farder till jus' as dem come to de town w'ere Miss Rose live, Anancy say, "Do me good, Tiger, give me a whip so I can brush de fly from off you for you' ears is full of dem," an' Tiger pick a switch an' give Anancy an' dem go on till dem ketch to de town w'ere Miss Rose live an' jus' as dem come to Miss Rose house, Anancy lay de whip 'pon Tiger back an' dig de spur into him side till Tiger 'blige to gallop an' as dem ketch to Miss Rose house door, Anancy jump off an' dere was Miss Rose standin' to see dem come, an' Anancy meck a mashin' bow to de lady an' says to her, "W'at I tell you? You see now dat Tiger is me fader old ridin' horse!"

Tiger was dat shame him teck to de bush an' dere him live ever since, but Anancy married Miss Rose an' live in a house.

## Anancy and Dog

ONE day Anancy go to a' ole lady house an' him see one goatskin dat de ole lady was dryin' on her house side, so him steal it an' carry it away to meck a tambourine an' after him meck de tambourine, him invite Bredda Dawg to go an' play de tambourine at a ball him was goin' to give. Den Anancy go to de ole lady house an' tell her an' de ole gentleman dat it was Dawg dat t'ief her goatskin an' him meck a bargain wid de ole lady an' de ole gentleman an' tell dem dat if dem doan t'ink is Dawg t'ief de skin den mus' come to de ball an' bring one Constable wid dem to teck de t'ief.

W'en de ole lady an' de ole gentleman come to de ball, Anancy teck up de tune an' commence to play an' him tell de ole lady to look an' see if it is not her goatskin w'at meck

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## Other Tales

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de tambourine, an' him play say, "Moder an' Fader los' dem velvety goatskin an' dis is it de Bohimbo got here." Den de ole lady go up an' look 'pon de tambourine an' she see dat it was her goatskin an' she teck up [arrested] Bohimbo.

Den Bohimbo say Dawg employ him to play de tambourine, an' Dawg say it was Anancy dat give him de tambourine to play an' Anancy deny de charge but dem go to court an' Anancy declare him never give no tambourine to Dawg, so dem fine Dawg an' Bohimbo an' prison dem an' Anancy go free.

## Anancy and His Family

EVERY day Anancy say him goin' look yam to buy, so every time him go to look yam him get ole yam, an' w'en him come home wid dis ole yam, him wife an' pick'ney [children] did n't know de name of de yam, so Anancy boil de yam an' after it boil him put it into de big dish an' sit down over it wid him wife an' pick'ney.

Now Anancy wanted was to eat it all himself, so him give out order say, "Who know de name can eat, who doan know de name must n' eat," an' as nobody did know de name 'ceptin' Anancy one, him eat off de whole dish of yam himself. Him continually done like dat; every time him come wid de yam him eat all of it himself so Tacooma say to him moder one day dat him will have to fin' out we're him fader gettin' dese yam from.

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## Other Tales

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So de marnin' w'en him fader was goin' off before day, Tacooma get up de same time an' t'row some ashes into him basket an' cut one little hole in de basket bottom.

All de time Anancy goin' along, de ashes drop right along an' Tacooma follow de track of de ashes till him ketch to one big flat rock; as him ketch to de flat rock him say, "No need go any fudder." Now Anancy comin' home has to walk 'pon dis flat rock so Tacooma turn back home an' get a basket of ockro an' him carry it to de flat rock an' mash up de ockro on de flat rock to make it slippery, den him go to one side an' hide in de bush till him see Anancy comin' wid de basket on him head.

Anancy come direc' on to de rock an' as him ketch on it him tumble down an' every bit of de yam mash up. As Anancy go to pick up de yam dem, him say "Lard! poor me Anancy; all me ole yam mash up!"

As Tacooma hear dat, him run out an' teck a short cut home, an' w'en him ketch to de



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## Anancy and His Family

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house, him tell him moder say de yam name "ole yam" so dat night w'en Anancy get home wid de yam an' after dem boil an' dem was sittin' down to eat, Anancy say:

"Who know de name can eat, who doan know de name can't eat." Den everybody holler out for "ole yam."

Anancy get vex' an' quarrel say Tac-cooma play him a trick, so him give up diggin' an' teck to growin' duckanoe.

THE END



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